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ABSTRACT

A study assessed the strengths, weaknesses, and degree of implementation of the reading dimension in the English Language Arts curriculum in grades 4, 8, and 11 of English language schools in Manitoba, Canada. At each grade, the student test assessed five major areas of reading performance. Assessment materials consisted of a student test, a student reading survey, and a teacher survey. Results for English language schools indicated that: (1) students at all grades demonstrated a high rate of response on the five subtests; (2) curriculum objectives related to literal comprehension in reading were satisfactorily achieved across all three grades; (3) many grade 8 and 11 students demonstrated difficulty in performing specific kinds of inferential reading tasks; (4) students had insufficient awareness of the variety of strategies available in constructing meaning from text; (5) students rated their reading abilities positively; (6) over nine-tenths of the teachers rated themselves as qualified or very qualified; (7) teachers felt in greater need of professional development in practical application areas than in theory-related areas; (8) teachers reported using a variety of different materials, although materials appeared to be insufficiently balanced; and (9) teachers at each grade level reported using a variety of teaching strategies. The report suggests that: educators have access to and make regular use of curriculum documents; students be given access to a wide variety of appropriate reading materials; and educators be informed and brought up to date on current research. (One hundred tables of data are included; four appendixes of data, scoring procedures, committee members, and a 34-item bibliography are attached.) (RS)

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MANITOBA READING ASSESSMENT 1992

FINAL REPORT

English Language Schools

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Manitoba Education and Training

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MANITOBA READING ASSESSMENT 1992

FINAL REPORT

English Language Schools

Grades 4, 8, 11

A REPORT OF THE

CURRICULUM SERVICES BRANCH

MANITOBA EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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PREFACE

The Manitoba Reading Assessment was conducted from May 25 to 29, 1992, in English language schools, Franco-Manitoban schools and the French Immersion program. Tests were administered to students in grades 4, 8 and grade 11. Surveys were also administered to a random sample of teachers at the same grade levels in each of the three client groups. Grade 4 English Language Arts teachers also performed a reading continuum rating of the students who had been selected to participate in the 1992 provincial Reading Assessment. In addition, comparison testing in reading was conducted at grades 3, 6, 9 and 12 from May 11 to 15, 1992, using the 1985 tests.

A *Preliminary Report* containing provincial data on the student test results for 1992 was prepared for each of the three grades and client groups following the scoring and coding of test results. These preliminary reports were distributed to schools and school divisions in November, 1992.

This *Final Report* of the 1992 Manitoba Reading Assessment provides a description of all components of the study, and an interpretation and discussion of the results. It also presents the conclusions and recommendations resulting from a review and interpretation of the findings by English Language Arts educators on the grade level Technical Advisory Committees. Separate reports were prepared for the three client groups.

To assist understanding, the Reading Assessment results presented in the *Final Report* should be reviewed in conjunction with the relevant assessment materials (student question booklets, reading selections, survey questionnaires, administration manuals and scoring keys) which were sent to schools and school divisions prior to the administration of the assessment. Additional copies of these materials are available from the Manitoba Text Book Bureau.

It is important that educational leaders ensure that educators have a forum for meaningful discussion of the 1992 Reading Assessment findings which resulted in many useful suggestions and recommendations regarding English Language Arts curriculum delivery.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This assessment could not have been conducted without the invaluable assistance of a great many people. Although all cannot be named here, thanks are extended to the students who took the written test and the teachers who administered it, the individuals who participated in pilot tests, and the teachers and advisors who worked on developing the objectives that were ultimately utilized in the assessment.

The following individuals and groups deserve particular thanks:

Members of the Technical Advisory Committees for advice throughout the process of creating tests and analyzing results;

The test developers for the benefit of their skills during various stages of the project;

Report writer, Susan Rempel Letkemann, for her writing, analytical and organizational skills;

The teachers for participating in the teacher survey;

The schools and school divisions for assistance in conducting the assessment; and

The secretaries of Manitoba Education and Training for excellent work preparing documents for publication.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the spring of 1992, Manitoba Education and Training conducted a provincial reading assessment to assess the strengths, weaknesses and degree of implementation of the reading dimension in the English Language Arts curriculum in grades 4, 8 and 11. Students participating in this assessment were drawn from three client groups: English language schools, Franco-Manitoban schools and the French Immersion program. At each grade, the student test assessed five major areas of reading performance. The assessment materials consisted of a student test, a student reading survey and a teacher survey.

The following table indicates the mean scores achieved by students in the five major areas of reading assessed in English language schools.

MEAN SCORES BY READING OBJECTIVES AT GRADES 4, 8 AND 11

READING OBJECTIVES	SUBTEST MEAN PERCENTAGE SCORES		
	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 11
Meaning Vocabulary	81.78%	75.77%	62.49%
Literal Comprehension	75.65	76.10	81.30
Interpretive Comprehension	74.47	58.67	53.77
Critical-Reflective Comprehension	62.06	52.24	52.53
Reading Strategies and Process Skills	*N/A	56.46	69.01

* Mean score not available because reading strategies and process skills items at grade 4 were not designed to be scored right or wrong.

A review of the 1992 Reading Assessment results reveals consistent patterns across all three grades. The major findings of the test and survey results for English language schools are highlighted in the following summary.

TEST RESULTS

Student Responses

Students at all grades demonstrated a high rate of response on each of the five subtests. Mean scores were higher on multiple-choice questions than on the open-ended questions for which students were required to provide their own answers. A large percentage of student responses to open-ended questions demonstrated a limited or partial understanding of the tasks and the readings in the student tests.

Meaning Vocabulary

Students at each of the three grades were generally more able to understand words whose meaning was explicitly stated in the text as compared to words which required students to infer meaning from implicit contextual clues and/or from experience. This suggests that instructional efforts need to be directed toward teaching and learning experiences which will enhance students' ability to use implicit contextual clues in understanding word meaning.

Literal Comprehension

Curriculum objectives related to literal comprehension in reading were satisfactorily achieved across all three grades. A large majority of students demonstrated proficiency in deriving literal meaning from various types of reading materials. There are indications, however, that students have insufficient skills and/or experience in adapting their reading strategies to suit various types of reading materials. For students at the grade 4 and 8 levels, this deficiency is most pronounced in relation to specific types of expository text. Grade 11 students appear to have a great deal of difficulty in responding to questions which require the application of a range of thinking strategies to problem-solving.

Interpretive Comprehension

Students in grade 4 tended to perform almost equally well on both the Literal Comprehension and Interpretive Comprehension subtests. In contrast, the performance of students in grades 8 and 11 was significantly lower on the Interpretive Comprehension subtest than on the Literal Comprehension subtest. Many grade 8 and 11 students demonstrated difficulty in performing specific kinds of inferential reading tasks. It appears that many grade 8 students lack the cognitive strategies required to differentiate between implicitly stated text and explicitly stated text, or to sort relevant from irrelevant data.

Grade 8 students had considerable difficulty interpreting the poetry selection. These students also demonstrated difficulty in manipulating statistical information presented in a table. Grade 11 students tended to perform well on a number of multiple-choice questions related to narrative text. Generally, the subtest results indicate that grade 11 students have considerable difficulty with reading tasks involving an interpretation of stylistic elements of text, particulary the use of tone in expository materials. These results suggest a need for greater instructional emphasis on learning experiences which emphasize reading, thinking and responding to transactional text.

Critical-Reflective Comprehension

Although the mean performance at each grade was lower on the Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtest than on any of the other subtests, the results reflect some promising developments in students' ability to explore and evaluate the implications of a variety of texts.

The high rate of partial responses (combined with the attempted but incorrect responses) indicates that nearly all students were attempting to interact with various reading materials at a critical-reflective level, and a large majority were fully or partially successful in their attempt. Many students, however, appear to have insufficient skills and/or experience in processing their thinking fully at this cognitive level and/or in supporting and elaborating their thinking. The subtest results, particularly at grade 4, do not demonstrate conclusively whether students were encountering limitations in their critical-reflective comprehension or struggling with the expression of their thinking in the form of written responses. The relatively weak performance on the Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtest may indicate a need for more extensive interactive reading/learning experiences which promote the development of higher-order thinking.

Reading Strategies and Process Skills

A review of the Reading Strategies and Process Skills subtest results at each grade level reveals that students have insufficient awareness of the variety of strategies available to them in constructing meaning from text. Grade 8 students appear to have the greatest difficulty processing certain types of expository text.

STUDENT READING SURVEY RESULTS

Students rated their reading abilities positively. Nearly all students reported reading for personal enjoyment outside of school. In identifying their choice of reading materials, grades 8 and 11 students expressed their strongest preference for magazines, while grade 4 students were most inclined to read adventure and mystery stories. Most students in grades 8 and 11 indicated they spend their own money on reading materials and share or exchange reading materials with others. Only a small majority of grade 11 students use libraries to obtain personal interest reading materials.

Despite the curriculum emphasis on discussion, group work, and co-operative and collaborative learning experiences, a large proportion of students reported limited participation in interactive/shared and extended reading activities. The majority of students in grades 8 and 11 perceived themselves as having a limited degree of choice in the selection of reading materials explored in the English Language Arts program. These same students revealed that few of them regularly practice the range of reading strategies which characterize strong readers. Students at all grades reported limited teacher-facilitated use of pre-reading strategies.

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Teacher Training and Professional Development

Over nine-tenths of the teachers completing the Teacher Questionnaire rated themselves as qualified or very qualified to teach English Language Arts at their current grade level. Grades 4, 8 and 11 teachers reported a median of at least 14 years teaching experience in total, and a median of 6, 8 or 11 years teaching English Language Arts at Early, Middle and Senior Years. Teachers who observed changes in their teaching practice during the last 5 years, attribute these changes to the influence of professional development opportunities and to their own professional reading or study.

Of the relatively small percentage of teachers who provided information on their academic training, few had acquired recent training in English, the teaching of English Language Arts, and the teaching of reading. The median number of hours of professional development in reading/English Language Arts reported by teachers at each grade level for the last 5 years was ten hours. Approximately half the grade 4 teachers and over half the grades 8 and 11 teachers noted that educational leaders in their schools infrequently or never refer to or encourage the reading of professional literature about reading/language arts.

The survey data indicates that teachers feel in greater need of professional development in practical application areas than in theory-related areas. Evaluation techniques for reading and strategies for specific types of text and reading processes, including content area reading strategies, were identified as areas of strong need. The teachers' ratings regarding the extent of their understanding of various areas of reading instruction currently emphasized in the curriculum indicate that they have the most extensive knowledge of content area reading and reading/writing portfolios.

School Organization

Approximately a third of the grade 4 teachers, half of the grade 8 teachers and four-fifths of the grade 11 teachers indicated they were teaching English Language Arts at their current grade by choice, the remainder indicating they were doing so by negotiated choice or assignment.

A substantial majority of teachers at all levels perceived themselves as having extensive influence over decisions directly related to the teaching of English Language Arts. Fewer than two-fifths of teachers, however, reported having great influence over discussions related to the kind of professional development mode available to them and the selection of material added to the school library.

The Curriculum

Only a small percentage of teachers professed to make frequent (weekly/monthly) use of the English Language Arts curriculum documents for their respective grades, yet nearly all teachers rated their knowledge of the documents as adequate or very adequate. Furthermore, virtually all considered themselves to have an adequate or highly adequate understanding of what students at the given grade level should be doing in English Language Arts and of the teaching strategies appropriate for that level.

Teaching Materials

Teachers reported using a variety of different materials in the reading/English Language Arts program at each grade; however, the range of materials used in teaching appears to be insufficiently balanced. Approximately three-quarters of all survey respondents noted they are able to purchase materials not in the Manitoba Text Book Bureau catalogue. Only about a quarter of the grade 8 and 11 teachers and less than a fifth of the grade 4 teachers indicated their school has a review process for evaluating such materials.

Teaching Practices

Teachers at each grade level reported using a variety of teaching strategies. The use of mini-lessons to the whole class was reported to be a much more common occurrence at all levels than the use of whole-class lectures. Frequent use of activities such as reading aloud to the class, large-group discussion, and small-group work for discussion, sharing or assignment completion was reported by a large majority of teachers. Contrary to the curriculum guidelines, however, teachers appear to place greater emphasis on teacher-directed experiences than on student-centered experiences. A significant percentage of teachers reported making infrequent or no use of student-centered activities such as reader response logs/journals, reading conferences, and readers theatre.

Teachers professed to value the use of a range of teaching practices, although to varying degrees. Variety of reading material and opportunities for personal response were judged very important by the highest percentage of teachers at each grade. Under two-thirds of grades 8 and 11 teachers and a little over two-thirds of grade 4 teachers ascribed great importance to student understanding and use of specific strategies for reading different types of materials.

Evaluation

Teachers claimed to value the use of a variety of evaluation products and processes for assessing reading growth and development. Of the evaluation products listed, daily work assignments were credited with great importance by the highest percentage of teachers at each grade level and standardized tests by the lowest percentage. In the category of evaluation processes, attitudes to reading emerged as the most important means of evaluation and peer evaluation as the least important. A substantial majority of teachers at each grade level did not identify strategy evaluation as a very important means of assessing reading, and a significant percentage gave only a somewhat important rating to such means of evaluation as reading/writing portfolios, reading response journals or logs, observation, and self-evaluation. Survey respondents at each grade level reported spending more time on formative evaluation than on summative evaluation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are common to all three grade levels. Other specific grade level recommendations are found at the end of each grade level report.

Since the role of administrators as curriculum leaders is crucial to program implementation, their support is required for the successful implementation of many of the following recommendations which state that:

- curriculum documents be reviewed by Manitoba Education and Training with a view to addressing teachers' concerns at various grades related to readability, accessibility, philosophy and implementation approaches;
- educators have access to and make regular use of curriculum documents in planning, delivering and assessing daily instruction;
- students be given access to a wide variety of appropriate reading materials;
- teachers become proficient at structuring various interactive learning experiences in order to develop students' higher-order thinking skills;
- teachers become proficient at structuring learning experiences which require students to recognize, articulate and use appropriate strategies for processing different types of text (e.g., exposition, poetry, narration, and tabular and statistical information);
- curriculum leaders provide opportunities for teachers to acquire and use a variety of evaluation strategies and resources consistent with the goals and objectives of the curriculum;
- educators (teachers, administrators and curriculum leaders) be informed and brought up to date, through professional development opportunities, on current research in reading/language arts.

CHAPTER 1

MANITOBA READING ASSESSMENT 1992: OVERVIEW

In 1992, the Curriculum Services Branch of Manitoba Education and Training conducted an assessment of the reading dimension of the English Language Arts curriculum for grades 4, 8 and 11. Tests and surveys were administered to three client groups: English language schools, Franco-Manitoban schools, and the French Immersion program. An overview of the development, implementation and processing of the various components of the 1992 Manitoba Reading Assessment is provided below.

Population Tested

Public and Funded Independent Schools in Manitoba were requested in January, 1992, to submit class lists of all students currently enrolled in grades 4 and 8, as well as all grade 11 students enrolled in second term or full-year English Language Arts courses.

Manitoba Education and Training selected students for the provincial sample from the class lists submitted by participating schools. Students in English language schools, Franco-Manitoban schools and the French Immersion program were sampled separately for the purposes of analysis. Provincial samples were drawn from the three client groups as follows:

- English language schools — 5% at grades 4, 8 and 11;
- Franco-Manitoban schools — 100% at grades 4, 8 and 11; and
- French Immersion program — 25%, 30% and 100% at grades 4 , 8 and 11 respectively.

Table 1 below indicates the number of tests returned, scored, coded and analyzed. (See detailed tables in Appendices A—C.)

TABLE 1

READING ASSESSMENT (1992): PROVINCIAL SAMPLE

Grade	English Language Schools	Franco-Manitoban Schools	French Immersion Program
4	568	430	456
8	540	437	413
11	739	160	415

While schools and divisions were required to test only the sampled students, they had the option of testing all students at the designated grades and comparing school and divisional results with the provincial results.

The provincial sample of teachers surveyed in the respective client groups is represented in Table 2 below. (See detailed tables in Appendix D.)

TABLE 2

TEACHER SURVEY (1992): PROVINCIAL SAMPLE*

Grade	English Language Schools	Franco-Manitoban Schools	French Immersion Program
4	248	17	69
8	252	16	29
11	201	12	34

* Number of surveys returned.

A copy of a Reading Continuum Rating was sent to grade 4 English Language Arts teachers whose students had been selected to participate in the 1992 Reading Assessment.

Samples for the comparison testing of the 1985 Reading Assessment in grades 3, 6, 9 and 12, which took place May 11 to 15, 1992, were drawn from all schools in Manitoba without distinction between client groups. Approximately 10% of the schools in the province were selected to participate at each of the four grade levels.

Purpose of Assessment

Curriculum assessment in Manitoba is designed to measure the goals and objectives of the Manitoba curriculum with the intent of identifying strengths and weakness and determining the degree of implementation of the various curricula. Province-wide assessments are intended to measure program effectiveness through the measurement of group performance; they are not intended to test the achievement of individual students.

The 1992 Reading Assessment in grades 4, 8 and 11 was part of the ongoing process of curriculum assessment in Manitoba. Several comparison tests were conducted as part of the assessment. In grade 4, a survey was conducted on teacher use of reading continua to determine the level of implementation of such instruments and to examine the relationship, if any, of teacher ratings of students (using the continuum provided) and student test results. A comparison was also made in Franco-Manitoban schools at grades 4 and 8 to ascertain possible differences in the test results of students enrolled in partial and total French programs. (Results reported in Franco-Manitoban report only.) The 1985 Reading Assessment was re-administered to a sample of students in grades 3, 6, 9 and 12 to determine the degree of change in student results over time.

Rationale for Test Construction

In the Manitoba English Language Arts curriculum, reading is viewed as an interactive communication process between author, reader and text. The process of constructing meaning from text requires readers to draw on their knowledge of content, text structure, syntax and grapho-phonics, and activate their repertoire of reading strategies before, during and after reading. Thinking must also occur if readers are to integrate their prior knowledge with new information and interpret and evaluate the author's message. Thus, readers are influenced by a combination of interactive factors such as the type of text being read, the structure and content of the reading materials, and the purpose for reading, as well as the strategies, knowledge, experience and attitudes brought to bear on the text and reading task.

This approach to reading provided the rationale for the content and structure of the 1992 Reading Assessment, informing the identification of objectives, the selection of reading materials, and the choice of question types, response formats and scoring rubrics. The provincial Reading Assessment was designed to model—to the greatest extent possible given the constraints of formalized, large-scale assessment—how the teaching, learning and assessing of reading can occur in the regular classroom.

Development and Administration of Assessment Instruments

Technical Advisory Committees (TAC) composed of education consultants, contract writer and language arts teachers from different parts of the province representing the three client groups were established for each of the three grades. These committees were responsible for reviewing and identifying the instructional objectives to be assessed, selecting assessment reading materials, and determining the format and content of the tests, surveys and scoring rubrics. Following the initial construction of the assessment items, the tests were piloted in representative Manitoba schools in January, 1992, and subsequently revised on the basis of the pilot test results.

The provincial administration of the Reading Assessment occurred May 25 to 29, 1992, in English language schools, Franco-Manitoban schools and the French Immersion program. Tests were administered to students in grades 4, 8 and 11. Whereas the grade 11 test was completed in one session of 120 minutes, the grade 8 test was conducted in two sessions, each within a suggested time frame of up to 80 minutes. In consideration of the developmental stage of Early Years children, the TAC recommended that the grade 4 assessment be administered either in four half-hour sessions or two one-hour sessions, and that the sessions occur on the same day or on consecutive days. The accompanying *Administration Manuals* emphasized the importance of giving students ample time and encouragement to do their best work so that the purposes of the assessment could be achieved.

The student tests were scored and coded July 6 to 10, 1992, by trained teams. (For information on scoring procedures and protocol, see Appendix E. Detailed coding procedures are available from the Assessment Section of Manitoba Education and Training.) Provincial test data were released in November, 1992, in a *Preliminary Report* for each grade and client group participating in the assessment. Preparation of the *Final Report* of the Reading Assessment results began in August, 1992.

Objectives Assessed

The Reading Assessment for each of the three grades attempted to measure reading objectives in the following areas:

MEANING VOCABULARY
- Understanding words in context.

LITERAL COMPREHENSION
- Understanding explicitly stated meaning.

INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION
- Inferring meaning not actually stated.

CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE COMPREHENSION
- Considering and evaluating the implications of text.

READING STRATEGIES AND PROCESS SKILLS
- Recognizing the use of, and interaction between, the thinking and metacognitive strategies involved in the reading process.
- Adapting and varying the use of these strategies at a conscious level according to the demands of the text and/or reading situation.

These objectives, which were assessed in relation to a variety of textual materials, formed the basis for the organization of the Reading Assessment results into five subtests.

Selection of Reading Materials

At all grade levels, the assessment reading materials were selected with the intent of integrating and reinforcing the curriculum approach to reading as an interactive communication process between author, reader and text. Numerous considerations were taken into account in the material selection process, including curriculum expectations, age appropriateness, gender and multicultural inclusiveness, topical relevance and reading situation.

Exposing students to a variety of texts is a central emphasis of the English Language Arts curriculum at Early, Middle and Senior Years. Accordingly, attention was given to including various types of text in the Reading Assessment. While it was impossible to sample the full range of reading materials and reading tasks with which students are engaged in daily life, an attempt was made to include a variety of texts representative of the kinds of reading materials students encounter throughout the school year, both in and out of the classroom. The grades 4, 8 and 11 Reading Assessments each included the following three types of text: narration, poetry and exposition. In addition, the grade 8 test included a table, and the grade 11 test included a table and charts. In the interest of preserving the structural and topical integrity of text, all the reading selections used in the assessment were complete texts, with the exception of the grade 8 expository material, which consisted of excerpts from various kinds of expository texts, reflecting the process frequently used in reading this type of material.

Topical relevance and accessibility were primary considerations in the selection and presentation of the assessment reading materials. As students were expected to read and respond to the materials independently (that is, without prior discussion), great emphasis was placed on choosing materials of appropriate difficulty. Care was also taken to include texts reflecting and relating to the interests and experiences of students at the different grade levels. Ensuring a balanced representation of male and female authors and/or characters was part of this effort. The reading materials for each grade were chosen on the basis of themes thought to have special interest for students at a given grade, and were presented in a format judged to be suitable for the intended audience. Each of the reading selections was preceded by brief comments intended to help focus students' thoughts on stylistic and/or thematic aspects of the text and to activate the readers' prior knowledge/experience of a given topic before reading.

Nature in Manitoba formed the unifying theme of the grade 4 reading selections consisting of two short stories, a poem and three expository pieces. These texts, each focusing on human encounters with animals in a natural environment in Manitoba, were reproduced directly in the *Student Booklet* for ease of student reference. The grade 8 reading materials, comprising a short story, a poem, a table and five related excerpts from expository texts, addressed the theme of risk-taking. The grade 11 materials, each dealing with an aspect of human interaction, consisted of an expository article, a table and two charts, a short story, and two poems, one of which was written by a teenage poet. The thematically-linked reading selections for the grade 8 assessment were reproduced in *Risk-Taking Review*, and those for the grade 11 assessment were featured in *Journal of Human Interaction*, two sample journal issues produced specifically for the assessment, partly in recognition of the sophisticated visual design of most current literature directed at young people.

Both the content and format of these special journal issues were intended to reflect the kind of literature and reading demands that students are likely to encounter in the school curricula and elsewhere in society. The choice of a journal format was an attempt to make the assessment reading materials appealing and accessible to students and relate it to their experience. It was also a means of allowing the text to be retained in classrooms for future use.

Question Types and Response Formats

In order to obtain information on specific reading objectives at the three grade levels, each assessment included questions representing five areas: Meaning Vocabulary; Literal Comprehension; Interpretive Comprehension; Critical-Reflective Comprehension; and Reading Strategies and Process Skills. Questions assessing the specified objectives were not grouped for the most part, but were interspersed throughout the assessment and applied to a range of materials. This approach was taken to reinforce the concept that reading involves various interactive, complementary skills rather than discrete and decontextualized skills.

Both choice (select-type) and open-ended (supply-type) test items were included at each of the grade levels. On the grade 4 test, both types of items were numbered consecutively, whereas on the tests at grades 8 and 11 the choice items were numbered and the open-ended items were designated by letter. The majority of items were presented in the choice format, with instructions to choose the best, correct or applicable response(s) from the options available.

Open-ended items were included to move away from a mechanistic way of assessing reading towards a more authentic approach which allows assessment of a range of objectives in a limited amount of time and provides students with an opportunity to give a multiplicity of text-appropriate responses demonstrating higher-level comprehension. Students were expected to give a variety of open-ended responses, including opinions, explanations or reasons for a given answer, and textual support or proof for a statement. While most of the items related to a single reading selection, a few at the grade 11 level required students to consider several selections and their relationships to each other in order to evaluate the application of learning from one reading context to another.

All but one of the open-ended items required written responses. The one exception, occurring on the grade 4 test, asked for a pictorial response (drawing) as an alternative mode of communicating reading comprehension. This item was included to emphasize that various modes of expressing comprehension are valid, and can be used for teaching, learning and assessing.

A set of focusing and/or prior knowledge questions preceded the scored segment of the Reading Assessment at each of the three grade levels. On the grade 4 test, each reading selection was also preceded by focusing questions. These questions were intended to introduce students to the theme of the assessment, activate their prior knowledge of a subject to provide a personal context for the reading selections, and prepare them for the independent reading tasks to follow. They were not intended to measure student reading performance.

Scoring Procedures

Detailed information on the scoring of both the choice and open-ended response items was provided in the *Scoring Key* prepared in conjunction with the Reading Assessment. The scoring key specified the correct response for all choice items included on the grades 8 and 11 tests, and for nearly all of the choice items on the grade 4 test. Since there was considerable room for subjectivity in responding to the items on the grade 4 Reading Strategies and Process Skills subtest, most of the response options for these items could not be classified as right or wrong. However, the preferred responses for these items were identified as expected responses in the *Scoring Key* and in the *Preliminary Report*.

The *Scoring Key* provided the following four-point rubric for scoring the open-ended response items: Complete (C), Partial (P), Wrong (W), and No Response (NR). A general description of the anticipated response and, where applicable, examples of student responses obtained during the piloting of the Reading Assessment were also included. The scoring rubric was developed on the basis of readers' interaction with the text to make meaning. In general, complete responses were characterized by: specific and accurate textual references; absence of extraneous information; consistent interpretation; appropriate and solid support; communication of complete understanding; evidence of reader interaction with an author's intent; and rational, logical and well-developed responses. Partial responses demonstrated some understanding, but provided insufficient information, generalized textual references and/or inconsistent interpretations. Although partial responses were in essence correct, they were not sufficiently supported to be fully satisfactory. For the purpose of calculating the mean performance on the subtests, complete responses were given a value of 1.0 and partial responses were given a value of 0.5.

One item (item 31) on the grade 4 Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtest was removed from analysis because on scoring it proved to be an invalid question. The scoring key was also modified slightly for one item (item 23) on the same subtest. These changes have been incorporated in the relevant documents available from the Manitoba Text Book Bureau.

Assessment Components (1992)

The grades 4, 8 and 11 tests were presented in the *Student Booklets* distributed to all assessment participants. These booklets contained the focusing and prior knowledge questions, the items assessing the instructional objectives for each of the five subtests, and the reading survey items inquiring about students' reading interests and habits both in and out of the English Language Arts classroom. Whereas the reading materials selected for the grade 4 assessment were reproduced directly in the *Student Booklet*, those for the grade 8 and grade 11 assessment were featured respectively in *Risk-Taking Review* and *Journal of Human Interaction*, two sample journal issues produced specifically for the 1992 Reading Assessment.

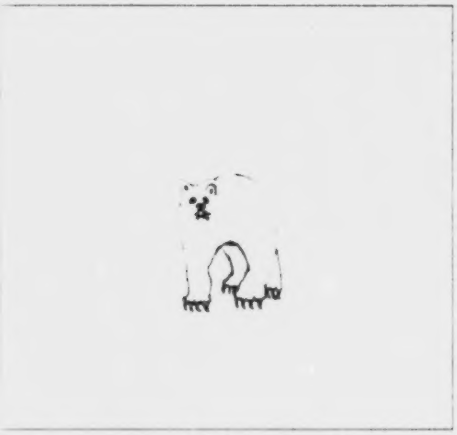
Schools participating in the Reading Assessment were also provided with a package of extension activities to encourage the integration of the assessment materials and activities with classroom learning experiences. These extension activities, combined with the *Risk-Taking Review* and *Journal of Human Interaction*, were intended to provide a cohesive thematic unit for authentic assessment and future use.

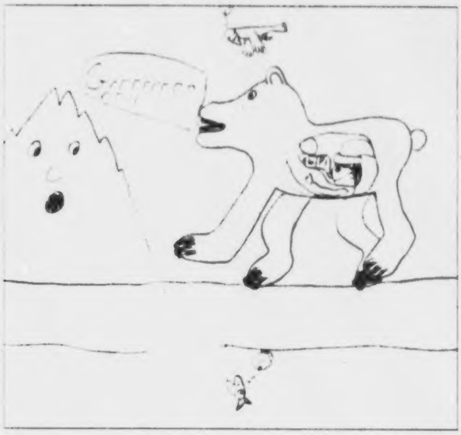
The 1992 Reading Assessment had several components in addition to the student test and reading survey. A Reading Continuum Rating was sent to grade 4 English Language Arts teachers whose students had been selected to participate in the assessment. Its purpose was to obtain teacher ratings on the reading levels of grade 4 students, to determine the extent to which English Language Arts teachers use reading continua in Manitoba schools, and to assess the relationship between teacher ratings of students and the assessment results.

A Teacher Questionnaire was also sent to a sample of grades 4, 8 and 11 teachers teaching English Language Arts in English language schools, Franco-Manitoban schools and the French Immersion program. This component of the Reading Assessment was intended to give teachers an opportunity to provide information and express their opinions and perspectives on the importance and implementation of various aspects of reading in the English Language Arts curriculum at the three designated grade levels. The teacher survey results were processed simultaneously with the student test and survey results, and are reviewed and discussed in this report.

Assessment Results

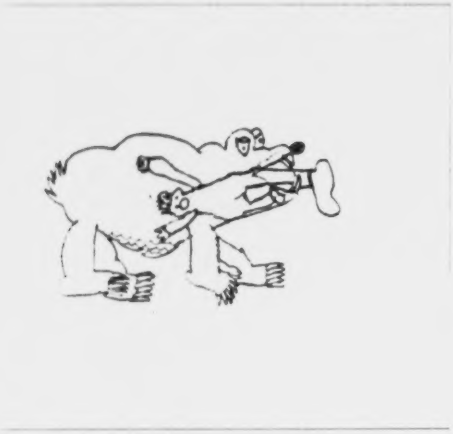
The results for each component of the 1992 Reading Assessment are reported and discussed in the following chapters of the *Final Report*. Assessment results for grades 4, 8 and 11 are reported in separate sections. Each section contains: a chapter providing a detailed description of the results for each item on the five subtests and an interpretation of student performance on each subtest, as well as a report of the student survey findings; a chapter reporting the teacher survey results; and a chapter discussing the student and teacher findings resulting in conclusions and recommendations.The last chapter of this report contains the results of: the grade 4 reading continuum rating for all client groups combined; and the comparison testing (1985-1992) for all relevant grades and client groups.





GRADE 4

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS



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CHAPTER 2

STUDENT TEST AND READING SURVEY RESULTS (GRADE 4)

INTRODUCTION

The grade 4 Reading Assessment sought to determine the extent to which the reading objectives of the English Language Arts curriculum are being implemented by testing student performance in the following five areas:

- Meaning Vocabulary
- Literal Comprehension
- Interpretive Comprehension
- Critical-Reflective Comprehension
- Reading Strategies and Process Skills

These objectives formed the basis for the categorization of the test items into five cognitive subtests.

The specified reading objectives were assessed in relation to the following three types of text:

• Narration:	Lyndsay Barrett George, "William and Boomer" (short story) Jane Chelsea Aragon, "Salt Hands" (short story, accompanied by illustration)
• Poetry:	Robert Heidbreder, "Polar Bear Snow"
• Exposition:	map, information, letter (relating to the Fort Whyte Centre, Winnipeg)

These thematically linked and gender balanced reading selections, each focusing on human encounters with animals in a natural environment in Manitoba, were preceded by brief comments intended to help focus students' thoughts on the various stylistic and thematic elements of the tests. All the reading selections were complete texts and were reproduced directly in the *Student Booklet* for ease of student reference.

The final component of the student test consisted of a reading survey inquiring about students' attitudes towards reading, as well as their reading habits and activities in and out of the English Language Arts classroom.

In the *Student Booklet* the test items were grouped according to the specific text to which they were directed rather than the objectives being assessed. However, the test results reported below are presented by subtest, followed by reading survey data. The numbers presented may not always total 100% because of rounding-off or because the non-response rate is not reported. A frequency distribution of responses to each assessment item was provided in the *Preliminary Report*.

FOCUSING AND PRIOR KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONS

Items: 1—5

The grade 4 Reading Assessment emphasized the importance of pre-reading experiences by posing focusing and/or prior knowledge questions at the start of each section of the assessment. These questions were intended to encourage students to draw on their store of knowledge, bring their own experience to the print, anticipate possibilities within the reading selections, and stimulate their thinking about the topics (content) explored in the various texts.

The response rate for each of the five focusing/prior knowledge questions introducing the assessment was 99.5% or higher. This indicates that the goal of these questions was achieved by nearly all assessment participants.

MEANING VOCABULARY

ITEMS: Multiple-choice: 14, 15, 16, 18, 33, 59

OBJECTIVE: **Meaning Vocabulary**

- Understanding words in context.
  - Explicit contextual use: the meaning is stated in the text.
  - Implicit contextual use: the meaning is suggested by the text.

The Meaning Vocabulary subtest, consisting of six multiple-choice items, assessed students' ability to determine the meaning of selected words within a specific reading context. Of the six words assessed, three were used in expository writing, one in the poem, and two in the narrative selections. In each case, students were referred to a particular reading selection and/or page in the *Student Booklet* where the respective words were used. An icon (☞) was placed in the margins of the text to help students locate the specific context.

RESULTS

The mean performance on the Meaning Vocabulary subtest was 81.78% (see Table 3 below). As shown in Table 4, the percentage of correct responses for the six multiple-choice items comprising the subtest ranged from 61.3% to 91.5%.

TABLE 3

MEANING VOCABULARY SUBTEST MEANS
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Subtest	Total Marks Per Subtest	Mean Raw Score	Mean Percent	Standard Deviation Raw Score
MEANING VOCABULARY	6	4.91	81.78%	1.29

The Meaning Vocabulary items generating the highest percentage of correct responses offered multiple contextual clues to the meaning of the words in question. For example, the poem in which a polar bear is described as a ''monstrous snowball'' contains numerous adjectives (for example, ''gigantic,'' ''huge'') whose meaning, within the context, is synonymous with ''monstrous.'' The poet further describes the bear's actions and physical attributes with the use of verbs such as ''grew'' and ''towered'' and the use of large numbers emphasizing the immense size of the bear. Given the profusion of explicit clues offered in the text, it is not surprising that nine-tenths of the students correctly selected ''very large'' as the meaning of the word ''monstrous'' (item 18). Just over nine-tenths accurately selected ''a soft crackling sound'' as the definition of the word ''rustle'' used in the story ''Salt Hands'' (item 59). In this text, the narrator uses the word ''rustle'' to describe something she ''heard'' and pairs it with the word ''breath,'' thereby suggesting a soft or quiet sound.

TABLE 4

MEANING VOCABULARY MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Item	Type of Text	Word	Meaning Context	Percentage of Student Responses Correct
14	Exposition	endangered	Experiential	61.3%
15	Exposition	consent	Implicit	77.6
16	Exposition	purchase	Explicit	89.4
18	Poetry	monstrous	Explicit	90.0
33	Narration	reeds	Implicit	80.8
59	Narration	rustle	Explicit	91.5

No explicit contextual clues were available for the item concerning the short story, ''William and Boomer'' (item 33). Despite this, four-fifths of the students selected the correct definition of the word "reeds," as it is used in the story. To arrive at the correct definition, students were required to draw on prior knowledge regarding the term "reeds" and/or a goose's natural habitat, or infer meaning by synthesizing various aspects of the story's physical setting ("lake," "fishing") and associating these details with the term "reeds."

Somewhat uneven results are apparent for the three items relating to the letter from a grade 4 class asking for parental consent to participate in a field trip. The results are, however, consistent with the level of contextual complexity: approximately nine-tenths of the students chose the correct definition of the word "purchase," whose meaning is explicitly suggested by the use of synonyms ("buy," "bought") and monetary references (item 16); just over three-quarters accurately selected the definition of the word "consent," whose meaning could be inferred through phrases such as "If you wish," "I would like" (item 15); and slightly over three-fifths recognized the meaning of the word "endangered," a lengthy word conveying an abstract concept which is not supported by any contextual clues (item 14).

Interpretation

Students gave a strong performance on the Meaning Vocabulary subtest. Approximately nine-tenths of the students were able to understand the words for which explicit contextual clues were available. A considerably smaller proportion demonstrated the ability to infer vocabulary meaning from implicit contextual clues or from prior knowledge or experience. Words conveying abstract concepts posed greater difficulty for students than those conveying concrete concepts.

LITERAL COMPREHENSION

ITEMS: Multiple-choice: 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 19, 61, 62
Open-ended: 23, 35, 36, 56

OBJECTIVE: **Literal Comprehension**

- Understanding explicitly stated meaning.

This subtest assessed the readers' ability to understand the literal meaning of explicitly stated textual information. Students were expected to attend closely to the reading materials as well as to the wording of the questions/statements.

Of the twelve items comprising the Literal Comprehension subtest, two related to the poetry, and five each to the narrative and expository texts. Eight items were presented in the multiple-choice format and four in the open-ended format. Open-ended responses were matched against the responses outlined in the *Scoring Key*.

RESULTS

As shown in Table 5 below, the mean performance on the Literal Comprehension subtest was 75.65%. This percentage takes into account the results for the eight multiple-choice items (see Table 6), as well as the results for the four open-ended items (see Table 7).

TABLE 5

LITERAL COMPREHENSION SUBTEST MEANS
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Subtest	Total Marks Per Subtest	Mean Raw Score	Mean Percent	Standard Deviation Raw Score
LITERAL COMPREHENSION				
• Multiple-Choice	8	6.31	78.83%	1.44
• Open-Ended (Rubric)	4	2.77	69.30	0.83
TOTAL	12	9.08	75.65	1.92

Multiple-Choice Items

The percentage of correct responses for the eight multiple-choice items on the Literal Comprehension subtest ranged from 44.4% to 99.5% (see Table 6 below). On average, over three-quarters of the responses to these items were correct, suggesting that the vast majority of students had little difficulty understanding explicitly stated meaning in the various types of text.

TABLE 6

LITERAL COMPREHENSION MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Item	Type of Text	Percentage of Student Responses Correct
6	Exposition	64.4%
7	Exposition	44.4
9	Exposition	83.6
12	Exposition	91.9
13	Exposition	88.9
19	Poetry	99.5
61	Narration	79.9
62	Narration	78.0

The item for which virtually all assessment participants selected the correct response required students to identify the seasonal setting of the poem, ''Polar Bear Snow'' (item 19). In addition to making an explicit reference to winter in the opening stanza, the poet includes numerous seasonal references (''snow,'' ''snowballs,'' ''frozen ground'') which most Manitoba students would naturally, although perhaps not exclusively, associate with a winter landscape.

Over three-quarters of the students chose the appropriate responses to both the multiple-choice items relating to ''Salt Hands,'' a story about a girl's encounter with a deer. For one of the items, students were required to pay close attention to the wording of the four response options referring to the ears, tail, antlers and colour of the deer, and match these against the narrative description of the deer's physical attributes (item 62). The other narrative-related item required students to note explicit descriptions of the girl's singing (''I sang . . . softly,'' ''I whispered my song'') and make the connection that, within the context of the story, the adverb ''quietly'' is equivalent in meaning to the words ''softly'' and ''whispered'' (item 61—79.9% selected the correct adverb ''quietly''; 16.7% chose the term ''slowly'' which describes the girl's actions in general).

The percentage of correct responses to the five multiple-choice items dealing with various expository texts ranged from 44.4% to 91.9%. Both the items concerning the letter in which a grade 4 class requests parental permission to participate in a field trip resulted in a high rate of correct responses. Approximately nine-tenths of the students correctly identified the purpose of the field trip (item 13) as well as one of the destinations of the field trip (item 12). In both cases, the information is directly stated in the letter.

Two items applied to information on the hours and rates of admission to the Fort Whyte Centre. More than four-fifths of the students successfully determined their own price of admission to the Centre on the basis of the student admission fees specified in the ''General Admission'' information panel (item 9). Less than half the students selected the correct day and date on which a visit could be made to the Fort Whyte Centre after 5:00 p.m. (item 7). The correct day/date could be identified by matching the various response options against the information on ''Extended Summer Hours,'' isolating the applicable option and/or eliminating the inapplicable options. A synthesis of information was required. Clearly, this was a complex literal comprehension task ranking high on the continuum of difficulty.

For the remaining item, students were expected to locate a particular point on a map and determine direction of travel to a specified destination on the basis of the compass symbol included on the map (item 6). Nearly two-thirds of the students accomplished this difficult task involving skills such as reading charts and graphing.

Open-Ended Items

On average, just over three-fifths (61.5%) of the responses to the four open-ended items on the Literal Comprehension subtest were scored as complete responses, nearly a quarter (24.3%) were rated as partial responses, and a little more than a tenth (12.8%) were judged to be wrong responses (see Table 7 below). The response rate for these four items was 97.9% or higher.

TABLE 7

LITERAL COMPREHENSION
OPEN-ENDED ITEMS
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Item	Type of Text	Percentage of Student Responses			
		Complete	Partial	Wrong	NR
23	Poetry	26.4%	52.6%	19.9%	1.1%
35	Narration	93.3	1.4	4.4	0.9
36	Narration	85.6	8.8	3.7	1.9
56	Narration	40.5	34.3	23.1	2.1

The two open-ended items focusing on "William and Boomer," a story about how a boy and a goose spend a summer by the lake, resulted in an exceptionally high percentage of complete responses. More than nine-tenths of the students provided fully satisfactory explanations of why William's initial request to learn to swim was refused by his parents, both of whom gave the same explicitly stated reason for their refusal (item 35). Close to nine-tenths also fulfilled the expectation of the second item, which was to list two things William learned to do as spring turned to summer (item 36). Since the story lists more than half a dozen activities, it is not surprising that the vast majority of students were able to identify two.

Three-quarters of the students gave either a complete or partial response to the item asking them to account for their knowledge that the narrator of "Salt Hands" is a girl (item 56). Since nothing in the story itself indicates that the narrator is a girl, students were expected to use clues external to the narrative in formulating their responses. Student responses were considered legitimate if they made reference to the directions preceding the story or to the picture illustrating the story (both of which inform the reader that the narrator is a girl), and/or indicated that the story has a female author and is written in the first person (this explanation was considered an acceptable response, given the cognitive development of students at this level). The high percentage of complete and partial responses to this item suggests that most students have some awareness of the importance of using supplementary (e.g., visual) clues to understand the text, and are using them in their reading.

The poetry-related open-ended item asked students to draw a descriptive picture of an important section of the poem, "Polar Bear Snow," with instructions to incorporate as many details as possible (item 23). The purpose of including this item was to provide students with an opportunity to use an alternative mode of communicating comprehension. This item not only emphasized the importance of reading for details in the directions as well as in the poem, but it also emphasized the need to identify important elements in the poem for use in the drawing. Approximately four-fifths of the students drew pictures which were considered complete or partial responses.

In scoring the drawings, credit was given to the inclusion of basic information supplied in the poem, along with a range of additional details included in the poem. A complete response featured eight to ten details, a partial response five to seven, and a wrong response four or fewer. The depiction of an unusual point of view was also given credit (the equivalent of five details) in combination with basic and/or additional information. This option accommodated certain points of view which did not allow for multiple details, or which included details extending beyond the immediate text (thus allowing for an interpretive response even though a literal response was expected).

Interpretation

The Literal Comprehension subtest results indicate that a substantial majority of students have well-developed skills in understanding the literal or explicitly stated meaning of various types of text, although some areas of inexperience and/or weakness are also evident in students' responses. The two multiple-choice items (items 6 and 7) resulting in the lowest percentage of correct responses both dealt with expository text. These items involved highly complex processing skills such as map reading and graphing (item 6) and synthesizing information from a detailed schedule (item 7), thus ranking high on the continuum of difficulty in literal comprehension.

Although the mean performance was higher on the multiple-choice items than on the open-ended items, students also demonstrated strong literal comprehension skills in their open-ended responses, particularly those relating to the narrative reading selections. The vast majority of students provided complete responses to the items addressing the story, "William and Boomer." In contrast, only a little over a quarter of the students were credited with complete success in their pictorial responses to the poetry-related item (the only open-ended test item requiring a mode of response other than writing); however, a small majority achieved partial success.

INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION

ITEMS: Multiple-choice: 10, 20, 57, 58
Open-ended: 60

OBJECTIVE: **Interpretive Comprehension**

- Inferring meaning not actually stated.

The Interpretive Comprehension subtest challenged students to go beyond a literal reading of the various texts by observing and interpreting subtle or inexplicit textual details. In some cases, students were required to synthesize various details within the respective texts to draw relevant inferences or appropriate conclusions.

Of the five items comprising the Interpretive Comprehension subtest, three related to the narrative, one to the poem, and one to the expository text. Whereas four of the items required a multiple-choice response, one required an open-ended response. Student responses to the open-ended item were matched against the responses outlined in the *Scoring Key*.

RESULTS

As reflected in Table 8 below, the mean performance on the five-item Interpretive Comprehension subtest was 74.47%. Approximately two-thirds of the students provided complete or partial responses to the open-ended item, and over two-thirds provided correct responses to each of the four multiple-choice items (see Table 9).

TABLE 8

INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION SUBTEST MEANS
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Subtest	Total Marks Per Subtest	Mean Raw Score	Mean Percent	Standard Deviation Raw Score
INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION	5	3.72	74.47%	1.04

TABLE 9

INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION MULTIPLE-CHOICE AND OPEN-ENDED ITEMS
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS		
Item	**Type of Text**	**Percentage of Student Responses Correct**
10	Exposition	88.6%
20	Poetry	72.4
57	Narration	71.7
58	Narration	92.6

OPEN-ENDED ITEM					
		Percentage of Student Responses			
Item	**Type of Text**	**Complete**	**Partial**	**Wrong**	**NR**
60	Narration	27.6%	39.1%	28.3%	4.9%

Of the five items comprising the Interpretive Comprehension subtest, four dealt with literary text. The three items concerning the story, ''Salt Hands,'' focused on the girl telling the story. When asked to select the word describing how the girl feels at the beginning of the story, close to three-quarters of the students chose the correct adjective, ''curious,'' an attribute conveyed through the girl's sensory awareness of her surroundings (e.g., through hearing, sight, touch) and her responses to her observations (item 57). Nearly all students noted correctly that the girl's purpose in sprinkling salt into her hands is to encourage the deer to come closer, presumably basing their responses on the girl's statement that she put salt in her hands because she ''didn't want to frighten the deer'' and/or on the deer's response of coming close to the girl and sniffing, tasting and licking the salt (item 58). For the third item, students were expected to use an example from the story to describe how the author conveys the girl's patience (item 60). Two-thirds of the students provided textual examples reflecting either a full or partial understanding of the word ''patient.''

With respect to the item concerning ''Polar Bear Snow,'' a poem about a person's encounter with a polar bear that initially appears to be a monstrous snowball, students were expected to observe the action within the poem. Specifically, students were required to infer that the bear is sleeping when the person in the poem first sees it, based on to the person's actions (e.g., pushing, punching and kicking the bear) and the bear's response (e.g., moving, stretching, growing). Almost three-quarters of the students made the correct inference (item 20).

One of the Interpretive Comprehension items dealt with expository text. In selecting the correct response to this question (item 10), students were required to locate the specific section of the text providing information on admission to the Fort Whyte Centre, and infer that, in this context, "free" means not having to pay admission, and that babies would be included in the "under 3 years of age" group for whom admission is free. Almost nine-tenths of the responses to this item were correct.

Interpretation

The results for the Interpretive Comprehension subtest indicate that a substantial majority of students have developed the ability to infer meaning from subtle or implicit textual details. Moreover, they are able to apply their interpretive comprehension skills to various types of text.

CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE COMPREHENSION

ITEMS: Multiple-choice: 63
Open-ended: 21, 22, 31[1] 32, 37, 67

OBJECTIVE: **Critical-Reflective Comprehension**

- Considering and evaluating the implications of text.

Students' critical-reflective comprehension skills were assessed in relation to poetry and narrative text, with two items focusing on the former and four on the latter. The various items on this subtest required students to consider stylistic elements of text, order the sequence of narrated events, evaluate text on the basis of its realistic and make-believe elements, interpret the views expressed in the writing, explore the implications of text, and elaborate on the meaning of text.

With the exception of one multiple-choice item, all the items on this subtest required open-ended responses. These were matched against the responses outlined in the *Scoring Key*.

RESULTS

The Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtest, consisting of six items, resulted in a mean performance of 62.06% (see Table 10 below), which is considerably lower than the mean performance on the previous three subtests.

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[1] Observations of the marking team and the grade 4 Technical Advisory Committee led to the conclusion that item 31 was an invalid question. Consequently, item 31 was eliminated from analysis.

TABLE 10

CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE COMPREHENSION SUBTEST MEANS
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Subtest	Total Marks Per Subtest	Mean Raw Score	Mean Percent	Standard Deviation Raw Score
CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE COMPREHENSION	6	3.72	62.06%	1.23

An overview of the results for this subtest shows that nearly all the responses to the multiple-choice item were correct, and that almost three-quarters of responses to the five open-ended items were scored either as complete (38.6%) or partial (34.6%) responses, while a quarter (25.0%) were scored wrong. The response rate for each of the items was 97.0% or higher (see Table 11 below).

TABLE 11

CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE COMPREHENSION
MULTIPLE-CHOICE AND OPEN-ENDED ITEMS
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEM					
Item	Type of Text	Percentage of Student Responses Correct			
63	Narration	93.0%			
OPEN-ENDED ITEMS					
		Percentage of Student Responses			
Item	Type of Text	Complete	Partial	Wrong	NR
21	Poetry	31.0%	34.5%	31.5%	3.0%
22	Poetry	52.5	19.2	27.1	1.2
32	Narration	29.4	35.9	33.8	0.9
37	Narration	60.9	23.9	13.9	1.2
67	Narration	19.2	59.3	18.7	2.8

Both the poetry-related items and one of the narrative-related items required students to formulate opinions based on their ability to discriminate between realistic and unrealistic elements within the given texts, a process relying heavily on prior understanding of the concept. One of these items asked students to consider a section of the poem in which the poet provides a description of the polar bear using increasingly large numbers, some of which exceed the plausible, and give a textually based opinion regarding the poet's purpose in using numbers (item 21). Approximately two-thirds of the students demonstrated either a complete or partial understanding of the poet's exaggerated use of numbers to emphasize the size and danger of the bear, which reflects an appreciation of the metaphoric use of language.

The other two related items involved similar tasks. One item instructed students to give a textually supported reason for judging the story related in the poem to be true or not true (item 22). Since the poem includes both real and imaginary components, students had the option of arguing that the story could not be true, or that some parts could be true and others not true. A small majority of students provided fully satisfactory support for the argument of their choice, and just under a fifth gave partially satisfactory support. Close to two-thirds of the students gave complete or partial responses to the item asking them to state their opinion as to whether the story "William and Boomer" is "a make-believe story" or "a real-life story," with instructions to list two pieces of information from the story giving clear support for either position (item 32). These results suggest that the majority of students have the ability to distinguish between realistic and unrealistic elements of literary text.

While the two items concerning the story "Salt Hands" required different types of responses (one multiple-choice and one open-ended), they had a similar focus in that each item expected students to attend closely to the views expressed in the text. Virtually all students indicated correctly that the author's feeling about deer is one of interest, which is communicated through her character's sensitive and detailed observation and description of the deer's appearance, movements, actions and even feelings (item 63). The task in the open-ended item was to describe the character of the girl in "Salt Hands," using details from the story (item 67). Essentially, this involved an assessment of the author's feeling about her character, as conveyed through her description of the girl's actions and observations. Approximately a fifth of the students gave complete responses and close to three-fifths provided partial responses. (Some students may have been confused about the term "character," interpreting the question as a request to give a physical description of the character.)

One item on this subtest dealt with "William and Boomer," a story about a boy's discovery of and activities with a goose, narrated in chronological order. Students were given a list of six events from the story and instructed to sequence them in the order in which they occur in the narrative (item 37). This involved rewriting them on the adjacent page containing a story map of three boxes labelled "beginning," "middle," and "end" of "William and Boomer." Over three-fifths of students placed all six events in the appropriate boxes, meriting a complete response, and nearly a quarter listed from three to five events in the appropriate boxes, rating a partial response.

Interpretation

Overall, students gave a promising performance on the Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtest. The results for one item suggest that students are especially proficient at story mapping (item 37). It is significant that virtually all students responded to each item on this subtest, with over nine-tenths selecting the correct response for the one choice item and approximately two-thirds or more providing complete or partial responses for each of the five open-ended items. These data provide evidence that almost all students interacted with the reading materials and a significant majority achieved varying degrees of success in evaluating the implications of text at a critical-reflective level.

Although a substantial percentage of students demonstrated effective critical-reflective comprehension skills, many were unable to process and/or express their thinking fully, consistently or appropriately at this cognitive level. The data suggesting that many students have difficulty responding to questions demanding critical-reflective comprehension do not give a clear indication of whether this difficulty is due to deficiencies in the students' critical-reflective thinking or to their inexperience in expressing that thinking in written form. For one item the question itself may have posed a problem for students, in which case the result may reflect an alternative subjective interpretation of a question rather than an inability to perform a task (item 67).

READING STRATEGIES AND PROCESS SKILLS

ITEMS: Multiple-choice: 11, 17, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 34
Dichotomous (Yes or No): 64, 65, 66
Open-ended: 8

OBJECTIVE: **Reading Strategies and Process Skills**

- Recognizing the use of, and interaction between, the thinking and metacognitive strategies involved in the reading process.
- Adapting and varying the use of these strategies at a conscious level according to the demands of the text and/or reading situation.

The assessment of reading strategies and process skills is a relatively new area of assessment in Manitoba. Formally included for the first time in the 1992 Reading Assessment, this subtest was intended to reinforce student awareness of the need to examine reading strategies and process skills at a conscious level. However, the selection of reading strategies assessed was neither comprehensive nor necessarily representative of the repertoire of strategies to which students need to be, or are being, exposed. Consequently, the results for this subtest may not be reflective of the full extent or range of students' abilities in this area. The subtest data must be interpreted with some caution.

The grade 4 Reading Assessment included fourteen items focusing on various reading strategies and on the application of these strategies before, during and after reading. Three of the items dealt with expository text, and eleven related to narrative text. Although several of these items appeared individually, most were presented in groups. All but one of the items on this subtest were presented in the choice format, which required students to select appropriate strategies, rather than propose strategies.

Because there was considerable room for subjectivity in responding to the thirteen choice items on this subtest, most of the response options could not be classified as right or wrong. There were preferred responses for all the items, however. These were identified as expected responses in the *Scoring Key* and in the *Preliminary Report.*

RESULTS

Table 12 below shows the percentage of students choosing the expected responses for the respective items on the Reading Strategies and Process Skills subtest.

Of the fourteen items comprising this subtest, three dealt with the use of pre-reading strategies, eight with during-reading strategies and three with post-reading strategies. The results for these groups of items are presented in separate sections below, along with the frequency distribution of responses (see Tables 13, 14 and 15). In general, the response options for these items involved a great deal of reading.

TABLE 12

READING STRATEGIES AND PROCESS SKILLS
MULTIPLE-CHOICE, DICHOTOMOUS AND OPEN-ENDED ITEMS
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS			
Item	**Type of Text**	**Type of Strategy**	**Percentage of Students Providing Expected Responses**
24	Narration	Pre-Reading	65.7%
25	Narration	Pre-Reading	30.5
26	Narration	Pre-Reading	46.0
11	Exposition	During-Reading	84.9
27	Narration	During-Reading	86.6
28	Narration	During-Reading	18.0
34	Narration	During-Reading	64.8
17	Exposition	Post-Reading	60.4
29	Narration	Post-Reading	46.0
30	Narration	Post-Reading	46.8
DICHOTOMOUS ITEMS			
64	Narration	During-Reading	62.1
65	Narration	During-Reading	40.1
66	Narration	During-Reading	77.6

OPEN-ENDED ITEM			Percentage of Student Responses			
Item	**Type of Text**	**Type of Strategy**	**Complete**	**Partial**	**Wrong**	**NR**
8	Exposition	During-Reading	21.3%	43.5%	31.9%	3.3%

Pre-Reading Strategies (Items 24, 25, 26)

In addition to serving as focusing questions for the story, "William and Boomer," three of the assessment items relating to Reading Strategies and Process Skills reinforced the need to think about a given text before reading, as an aid to understanding the text (items 24, 25, 26). These items asked students to identify the strategy, from a list of four, that they would find most helpful in preparing to read. Both the focusing question and the instructions preceding these items provided contextual clues for identifying the expected responses, each of which focused on the need to anticipate, or establish some expectations about, the possible content and/or purpose of the reading material. Students were expected to choose the following options in responding to the statement, "Before I begin reading, it's a good idea to":

- make some guesses about what I think will happen in the story (selected by nearly two-thirds of the students—item 24);
- use my questions and guesses as a reason for reading the story (selected by close to a third—(item 25);
- think of what the people in the story might be like (selected by nearly half—item 26).

On average, less than half the students selected the expected responses for these three items (see Table 13 below).

TABLE 13

PRE-READING STRATEGIES
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Item	Type of Text	Frequency Distribution of Responses				
		A	B	C	D	NR
24	Narration	12.0%	10.0%	65.7%	11.6%	0.7%
25	Narration	34.3	30.5	31.2	3.5	0.5
26	Narration	13.0	21.8	46.0	18.3	0.9

NOTE: the figures underlined represent the expected responses for the respective items.

The items focusing on pre-reading strategies were preceded by three sets of instructions, which may have created confusion for some students. After being asked to make predictions about "William and Boomer," students were encouraged to think about the "kinds of things [they] can do to help them understand a story" before reading it. The statement immediately preceding the three items instructed students to identify the one answer, from four possible answers, "that would help [them] the most to get ready to read" without specifying any particular type of text or reading situation. Students may have been confused about whether the items referred specifically to "William and Boomer," to any kind of story, or to any type of text.

Furthermore, students may have been uncertain whether the things they could do to help them "get ready to read" referred to pre-reading strategies that help them understand what they read, or to other practical considerations, some of which would be determined by reading context and/or specific text (e.g., length of time available, length of text). Although there was an expected or preferred response for each item, students could not be faulted for choosing an alternative response based on their subjective interpretation of the task. Thus, the results for these items do not necessarily give an accurate indication of the pre-reading strategies students are or are not using.

During-Reading Strategies (Items 8, 11, 27, 28, 34, 64, 65, 66)

The eight items focusing on during-reading strategies required various kinds of responses: one asked for an open-ended response; four presented a choice of four response options; and three presented two response options. For a frequency distribution of responses see Table 14 below.

TABLE 14

DURING-READING STRATEGIES
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

		Frequency Distribution of Responses				
Item	Type of Text	Complete	Partial	Wrong		NR
OPEN-ENDED ITEM						
8	Exposition	21.3%	43.5%	31.9%		3.3%
		A	B	C	D	
MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS						
11	Exposition	6.7	84.9	5.3	2.8	0.4
27	Narration	86.6	3.9	3.3	5.3	0.9
28	Narration	2.6	74.1	4.4	18.0	0.9
34	Narration	18.8	10.0	5.1	64.8	1.2
DICHOTOMOUS ITEMS		Yes	No			
64	Narration	62.1	37.0			0.9
65	Narration	40.1	58.6			1.1
66	Narration	77.6	21.5			0.9

NOTE: the figures underlined represent the expected responses for the respective items.

Two items asked students to note which strategy, from a list of four possible strategies, they find to be most helpful while reading, although neither the type of text nor the reading context was specified. For one of the items, close to nine-tenths of the students selected the expected response which focused on monitoring understanding while reading (item 27). In contrast, less than a fifth of the responses selected for the second item corresponded with the expected response, which focused on assessing whether the reading material verified or contradicted the reader's expectations or predictions (item 28). For the latter item, approximately three-quarters of the students selected the response or strategy of taking care not to skip any parts of the story.

In addition to being required to identify useful reading strategies, students were expected to apply and monitor/evaluate their use of reading strategies within the context of the assessment reading materials. Two of these items dealt with expository text. For the open-ended item, students were required to state how they arrived at their answer for the question asking them to select the day/date on which visitors were admitted to the Fort Whyte Centre after 5:00 p.m. Almost two-thirds (64.8%) of the students' responses reflected either a complete or partial understanding of the process of referring to the appropriate text and noting the precise location within the text providing the applicable information (item 8). The multiple-choice item asked students to indicate what helps them find directions (North, South, East, West) on a map. More than four-fifths of the students reported using the compass symbol on the map (item 11).

Another item asked students to select a good strategy for determining the meaning of an unfamiliar word in a story (item 34). Nearly two-thirds selected the strategy of reading the sentence before and after the one in which the unfamiliar word appears. These results suggest that the majority of students recognize the usefulness of contextual clues as a means of deriving meaning from text.

Three items (64, 65, 66), for each of which the expected response was "yes," inquired about students' use of specific strategies while reading the story "Salt Hands" (see Table 14 above). Nearly two-thirds of the students noted that they looked back at parts of the story they had already read (item 64); over three-quarters looked at the illustration accompanying the story (item 66); and two-fifths tried to predict what would come next in the story (item 65).

Post-Reading Strategies (Items 17, 29, 30)

Overall, approximately half the students selected the expected responses for the three items focusing on strategies employed following the reading of text (see frequency distribution of responses in Table 15 below).

TABLE 15

POST-READING STRATEGIES
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Item	Type of Text	Frequency Distribution of Responses				
		A	B	C	D	NR
17	Exposition	29.9%	60.4%	0.9%	7.2%	1.6%
29	Narration	11.8	31.0	46.0	9.9	1.4
30	Narration	4.6	15.7	46.8	30.8	2.1

NOTE: the figures underlined represent the expected responses for the respective items.

Two of the items dealt with narrative text, one focusing on narrative text in general and the other on a particular narrative. In responding to the item inquiring about the most helpful of four possible strategies to use after reading a story, just under half the students selected the expected response, "it's a good idea to tell the story in my own words to make sure I understand it"; nearly a third felt it was most useful to "check to see if I skipped any of the vocabulary words" (item 29).

The second narrative-related item referred specifically to the story, "William and Boomer,"which describes how William learns to swim. Students were asked to indicate which of four approaches they would use "to make a list of what William had to learn before being able to swim" (item 30). Almost half the students indicated they would "re-read the story and make a list of William's activities in learning to swim," which was the expected response; just under a third opted for "re-read[ing] the story and mak[ing] a list of the things William learned that summer"; and close to a fifth chose the option of "re-read[ing] the story and mak[ing] a list of the things William and Boomer did together." The group of students selecting the expected response demonstrated their awareness of the need to isolate/focus on relevant information within a given text. However, the latter two options were also valid, considering that the term "being able to swim" could be interpreted as getting permission to swim rather than developing the ability to swim.

For the final item, students were expected to identify in which of four possible sections in a library they would be able to find additional information on the Fort Whyte Centre. Essentially, this task consisted of identifying the genre under which informational text belongs or is classified. Three-fifths of the students noted appropriately that the relevant information would be located in the non-fiction section of the library, whereas nearly a third indicated they would look for it in the fiction section (item 17).

Interpretation

Students may have been confused about certain tasks required in the Reading Strategies and Process Skills subtest since the wording of some questions and the instructions preceding them allowed for diverse interpretations. Therefore, some of the results may be more of a reflection of a subjective interpretation than of an ability or inability to identify or apply a particular reading strategy.

Several observations can be made, however, on the basis of student responses. Overall, a slightly higher percentage of students provided the expected responses for the items relating to during-reading strategies than for those asking about pre- and post-reading strategies, which may be an indication that students' during-reading strategies are somewhat better developed than their pre- and post-reading strategies. Furthermore, the majority of students did not report using the strategy of prediction about a given text either prior to reading (items 25, 26) or during reading (items 28, 65). This indicates that students do not identify prediction as a strategy they use; it does not necessarily establish that they do not use prediction.

While the results for the Reading Strategies and Process Skills subtest are largely inconclusive, they do suggest that grade 4 students have limited knowledge about and/or experience in making a conscious assessment of their reading strategies and articulating what they perceive themselves to be doing in the reading process.

STUDENT READING SURVEY

ITEMS: 38—55

The grade 4 Student Reading Survey inquired about students' self-perception as readers, their attitudes toward reading, and their reading activities at home and at school. They were not asked to specify what language they were reading. In the instructions preceding the survey, students were assured that there were no right or wrong responses and were encouraged to answer all questions as honestly as they could.

Of the eighteen items comprising the reading survey, fifteen were presented in the multiple-choice format requiring students to select one of four possible response options; one was a multiple-selection item asking students to circle all applicable options from a choice of fifteen; and two were open-ended items requiring written responses. The scoring rubric outlined specific criteria for grouping the open-ended responses.

Students' Self-Assessment As Readers

As reported in Table 16 below, virtually all the grade 4 students surveyed professed to enjoy reading: a small majority chose the option, "I like to read," and a little over two-fifths chose the option, "I like to read sometimes" (item 38). When asked to assess their competency as readers (item 39), nearly half the students identified themselves as good readers, close to a quarter judged themselves to be average readers, and just over a quarter noted they were not sure what kind of readers they were. Significantly, only 1.6% classified themselves as poor readers, and only 3.3% claimed not to like/have an interest in reading (see Table 16).

Somewhat contradictory responses were selected for the items asking for an identification of the most difficult aspect of reading and the strategy with which reading could be improved (see Table 16). While close to a third of the respondents noted that ''nothing about reading is difficult'' for them, nearly a third reported experiencing the greatest difficulty ''knowing the words,'' over a quarter indicated that ''understanding the story'' is the most difficult part of reading, and under a tenth selected ''reading fast enough'' as a problem area (item 49). Although ''understanding the story'' (constructing meaning from text) was identified as the greatest reading challenge by over a quarter of the respondents, only 3.7% felt they could become better readers by ''reading for meaning'' (item 40). (Students may not have understood what was meant by ''reading for meaning''.) About a tenth of the students favoured ''reading aloud'' as a strategy for improving their reading, just over a fifth chose ''reading for fun,'' and close to two-thirds chose ''practicing.''

TABLE 16

STUDENTS' SELF-ASSESSMENT AS READERS
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Item	Response Options	Percentage of Students Selecting Response
38. Do you like reading?	a) I like to read.	52.3%
	b) I like to read sometimes.	43.0
	c) I do not like to read.	1.9
	d) I am not interested in reading.	1.4
39. I am:	a) a good reader.	46.1
	b) an average reader.	23.9
	c) a poor reader.	1.6
	d) not sure what kind of reader I am.	27.1
40. I can become a better reader by:	a) practicing.	64.4
	b) reading for meaning.	3.7
	c) reading for fun.	21.1
	d) reading aloud.	9.2
49. What is the most difficult part of reading?	a) Knowing the words.	30.3
	b) Understanding the story.	28.5
	c) Reading fast enough.	8.3
	d) Nothing about reading is difficult.	31.0

Personal Importance of Reading

Several survey items addressed the importance reading has for students in their personal lives. As indicated in Table 17 below, almost all students ''often'' or ''sometimes'' read for fun out of school (item 53), consider reading a good way to spend spare time (item 51), and like receiving books for presents (item 52). While most students value reading for fun, they do not seem to view such reading as a means of becoming better readers (as shown in item 40 above, only a fifth of the students perceive ''reading for fun'' as a reading improvement strategy).

TABLE 17

PERSONAL IMPORTANCE OF READING
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Item	Students:	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
51	view reading as a good way to spend spare time.	53.3%	37.9%	4.2%	2.5%
53	spend time reading for fun out of school.	44.4	34.2	12.5	7.0
52	like getting books for presents.	32.7	47.0	10.0	8.5

Choice of Reading Material

The reading survey also requested information on the kinds of literature students prefer to read, and the criteria they use in choosing reading material. In one item, students were asked to name three of their favourite books, stories or authors (item 50). Over three-quarters of the students (78.3%) listed three distinct/different books, short stories or authors, and close to a fifth (16.5%) listed one or two different works.

Students were also asked to select, from a list of fifteen different genres or types of text, the kind of reading material they usually choose to read on their own at home or at school (item 54). Nearly three-quarters (72.7%) of the respondents selected four or more texts, and nearly a quarter (23.9%) selected from one to three texts. Judging from the percentage of students selecting from the respective reading materials listed below, the majority of students in grade 4 have a preference for adventure stories, mystery stories and comics:

• Adventure Stories	72.9%
• Mystery Stories	72.7
• Comics	63.6
• Animal Stories	48.8
• Sports Stories	38.9
• Magazines	38.6
• Humour	38.2
• Poetry	27.0
• Science Fiction	25.4%
• Science Books	21.0
• Newspapers	19.2
• History	17.8
• How-to-Books	17.5
• Romance Stories	16.7
• Biographies	6.2

When asked to indicate what helps them choose to read a story or book (item 55), nearly half the students (46.5%) specified book handling as a criterion influencing/determining choice of reading material, and approximately a fifth (19.2%) specified genre or topic. Only a few of the responses made reference to help from someone else (5.5%) or to authors (4.4%) as factors in deciding what to read (the latter figure may be low because students may have made the choice of author prior to choosing reading material). A substantial proportion (24.5%) of the students either gave no response or specified factors which did not fit under the above categories.

Shared and Extended Reading Experiences

Oral reading, selected by less than a tenth of the students as a method by which to improve their reading, appears to have a more prominent place in school than at home (see Table 18 below). More than four-fifths of the students reported that their teacher reads a story to the class weekly or daily (item 42). In contrast, just over a quarter noted that an adult reads a story to them and they read one to an adult at home weekly or daily; the majority indicated that they never or almost never read a story to an adult or have one read to them by an adult at home (items 47, 48). Students were not asked how often they read to someone other than an adult at home, nor how often they have opportunities to read aloud in school.

TABLE 18

FREQUENCY OF ORAL READING EXPERIENCES
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Item	Activity	Once a Day	Once a Week	Once a Month	Almost Never or Never
42	Teacher reads story to class.	61.8%	21.0%	7.7%	7.4%
47	Adult reads story to students at home.	12.1	13.6	13.9	59.0
48	Students reads story to adult at home.	9.7	19.5	18.8	50.2

Survey responses show that shared reading experiences with friends and classmates are a common occurrence for a small majority of students (see Table 19 below). Approximately half (51.1%) the students reported talking about their reading with friends at school at least once a week or almost daily; however, nearly a third (32.7%) indicated they never/almost never talk about or share what they have read with friends at school (item 41). A similar pattern is reflected in student responses to the item inquiring about the frequency with which teachers initiate joint reading activities (item 45). Just over half (51.1%) the students noted that their teacher provides them with opportunities to work in pairs or small groups for a reading activity at least once a week to almost every day, the remainder indicating they have occasion to participate in teacher-initiated joint reading activities at least once a month (28.2%) or never/almost never (19.0%).

The reading survey also asked students to report how often they write in a journal about something they have read (item 46). According to the survey results, a little over two-fifths (42.9%) of the students make journal entries in response to their reading at least once a week or almost every day, and nearly the same proportion (38.7%) never/almost never make reading-related journal entries (see Table 19 below).

TABLE 19

FREQUENCY OF SHARED AND EXTENDED READING EXPERIENCES
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Item	Students:	Almost Daily	At Least Once a Week	At Least Once a Month	Almost Never or Never
41	talk about or share what they have read with friends at school.	23.6%	27.5%	14.8%	32.7%
45	work in pairs or small groups for reading activity.	20.1	31.0	28.2	19.0
46	write in journal about something they have read.	18.1	24.8	16.7	38.7

Teacher-Facilitated Use of Reading Strategies

Two survey items focused on the frequency with which teachers use specific pre-reading and post-reading strategies to assist students in preparing for and understanding their reading. According to student responses (shown in Table 20 below), the majority of teachers infrequently or never use webs and/or story maps to help students understand a story (item 44), or ask students to talk about a story before they read (item 43). Since each of these questions began with the words, "How often does your teacher ask/help you . . . ," some students may have understood the questions to apply to them individually rather than to the class as a whole, in which case the results may not be an accurate reflection of classroom practice.

TABLE 20

TEACHER-FACILITATED USE OF READING STRATEGIES
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Item	The Teacher:	Almost Daily	At Least Once a Week	At Least Once a Month	Almost Never or Never
43	asks students to talk about a story before they read.	20.4%	26.1%	13.2%	38.7%
44	helps students understand a story by using webs and/or story maps.	12.5	23.6	21.1	40.3

CHAPTER 3

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS (GRADE 4)

INTRODUCTION

The Teacher Questionnaire accompanying the grade 4 Reading Assessment (1992) was sent to a total of 305 teachers teaching English Language Arts in English language schools, and was completed by 248 teachers. The return rate was 81.3%.

This component of the Reading Assessment was intended to give teachers an opportunity to provide information and express their views on the implementation, importance and/or adequacy of the following aspects of reading/English Language Arts:

- teacher training and professional development
- school organization
- the curriculum
- teaching materials
- teaching practices
- evaluation

In the final section of the survey, teachers were invited to make any additional comments regarding the teaching of reading at the grade 4 level, as well as on the strengths and weaknesses of the grade 4 Reading Assessment.

A detailed report of the Teacher Survey results follows. It is important to keep in mind that the statistics represent the responses of teachers coming from schools of varying sizes, which affect factors such as class size, availability of resources and support services, and so on. Unless specified otherwise, the percentage figures take into account all 248 teachers completing the questionnaire. Where reported cumulative percentages do not add up to 100%, it is due to rounding-off or because the non-response rate is not reported. Non-respondents are excluded from the mean and median figures reported.

TEACHER TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teaching Experience (Items I[A, B])

As of June, 1992, the teachers in grade 4 English language schools who completed the Teacher Questionnaire had a median of fourteen years of teaching experience in total, and a median of six years of experience teaching Early Years (grades K—4) English Language Arts. Nearly two-thirds (64.9%) of the teachers reported having more than ten years of teaching experience in total (84.7% had five or more years), and just over a third (34.3%) had more than ten years of experience teaching Early Years English Language Arts (65.3% had five or more years). Evidently many teachers now teaching grade 4 English Language Arts have spent time teaching at other levels and/or other curricula.

Academic Training (Item I[C])

Teachers were asked to specify how many three-credit courses (half courses) they had taken in total and in the last five years in the following two areas: the teaching of English Language Arts (Education Faculty); and the teaching of reading (Education Faculty). The non-response rate for these survey questions was exceptionally high: over a third of the teachers did not provide information on the number of courses taken in total, and just over half did not provide information on the number of courses taken during the past five years.

The survey data on the total number of three-credit courses taken indicate the following: 8.9% had taken no courses in the teaching of English Language Arts, 40.4% had taken one to four courses, and 13.6% had taken five or more (37.1% did not respond); and 10.1% had taken no courses in the teaching of reading, 43.9% had taken one to four courses, and 2.0% had taken five or more (44.0% did not respond). In total, survey respondents reported having taken a median of 2.0 three-credit courses in the teaching of English Language Arts and 1.0 three-credit course in the teaching of reading. The median number of courses taken by survey respondents in the past five years in each of these two areas was 0.0.

Knowledge of Reading Instruction (Item I[D]

Teachers were asked to rate their own knowledge of various areas of reading instruction currently emphasized in the curriculum, although they were not asked to specify how they obtained their knowledge (that is, whether through academic course work, professional development sessions, or their own reading).

As shown in Table 21 below, over three-fifths of the teachers professed to have a thorough understanding of: content area reading; reading/writing portfolios; language across the curriculum; teaching of reading strategies; whole language; and bulk reading. More than two-fifths also professed to have a thorough understanding of: developmental reading; reader response; and reading cuing systems. Significantly, from just over a fifth to almost half of the teachers considered themselves to have only a partial understanding of every major area of reading instruction listed. Approximately a tenth claimed not to understand two of the areas.

TABLE 21

TEACHERS' SELF-RATED KNOWLEDGE OF READING INSTRUCTION

English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Area of Reading Instruction	Understand Well	Understand Partly	Do Not Understand	NR
• Content area reading	74.2%	22.6%	2.0%	1.2%
• Reading/writing portfolios	69.8	28.6	0.8	0.8
• Language across the curriculum	69.4	28.2	1.2	1.2
• Teaching of reading strategies	64.1	31.9	1.2	2.8
• Whole language	62.1	37.1	0.4	0.4
• Bulk reading	60.5	31.0	7.3	1.2
• Developmental reading	47.2	44.8	5.6	2.4
• Reader response	44.8	41.9	10.1	3.2
• Reading cuing systems	41.1	46.4	10.5	2.0

Professional Development in Reading/English Language Arts (Items I [E, F, G, H])

While few teachers reported having taken post-secondary courses in the teaching of reading/ English Language Arts in the last five years, nearly all claimed to have had opportunities to participate in professional development in these areas during that time. Of the teachers with five or more years of experience teaching Early Years English Language Arts, 67.9% reported having had ten or more hours of professional development in reading/English Language Arts *available* to them during the past five years, 17.3% had five to nine hours, 10.5% had one to four hours, and 2.5% had no opportunities (1.9% did not respond). By comparison, 46.3% reported *having taken* ten or more hours of professional development in these areas during the same period, 16.7% had taken five to nine hours, 8.0% had taken one to four hours, and the remainder either had not taken any (1.2%) or did not respond (27.8%).The median number of hours of professional development taken by survey respondents in these areas during the past five years was 10.0 hours.

In assessing the usefulness of the professional development sessions in reading/English Language Arts in which they participated during the past five years, nearly three-fifths (58.1%) of the teachers rated the sessions as "extremely useful" or "very useful" and just over a third (34.7%) rated them as "somewhat useful." A few (.8%) teachers judged the sessions to be lacking in usefulness.

Survey participants were also given an opportunity to rate their need for professional development on seven different topics. These topics are listed in Table 22 below according to the percentage of teachers registering "great" or "some" need for professional development in the respective areas.

TABLE 22

TEACHER RATING OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOPICS
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Professional Development Topics	Great + Some Need	Great Need	Some Need	No Need	NR
• Evaluation techniques for reading	91.5%	37.9%	53.6%	6.0%	2.4%
• Strategies for specific types of text and reading processes including content area reading strategies	88.7	28.6	60.1	9.7	1.6
• Teaching approaches (e.g., grouping, paired learning)	80.7	20.6	60.1	17.3	2.0
• Available reading materials	73.8	23.8	50.0	23.0	3.2
• Use of the curriculum documents for grade 4 English Language Arts	71.8	15.3	56.5	24.6	3.6
• Basic reading theory	63.7	11.3	52.4	33.1	3.2
• General philosophy of the English Language Arts curriculum	60.4	4.4	56.0	37.5	2.0

Approximately three-quarters or more of the teachers noted a need for professional development on four of the seven specified topics: evaluation techniques for reading; strategies for specific types of text and reading processes including content area reading strategies; teaching approaches; and available reading materials. Although the majority of teachers also registered some or great need for professional development on the use of the grade 4 English Language Arts curriculum documents, basic reading theory, and the general philosophy of the English Language Arts curriculum, between one- and two-fifths registered "no need" for sessions on these topics. The high rate of response to this survey question may be an indication of the teachers' interest in being involved in identifying professional development needs and making decisions regarding professional development opportunities.

A substantial proportion of the teachers (16.5%) also took the opportunity to specify additional professional development topics. Respondents offered a total of twenty suggestions on a wide range of topics. More than one respondent identified needs in the following three areas: whole language, collaborative/cooperative/shared reading, and strategies for teaching students with different abilities/interests/needs.

Professional Literature/Resources (Item I[I])

Teachers also reported on the availability and use of professional literature and its influence on their current teaching practice. According to teacher responses, close to three-quarters (71.8%) of the schools make professional reading materials available to teachers weekly or monthly, 15.3% do so quarterly, and 6.0% never do so (6.9% of the teachers did not respond). The frequency with which professional materials are made available in schools exceeds the frequency with which teachers read articles from professional journals/books about reading/ language arts. A small majority (58.1%) reported reading such literature weekly/monthly, while over a third (35.9%) reported doing so every four months, and a few (4.0%) never do so.

About half the teachers indicated that the contributions/support of colleagues and administrators with respect to promoting professional literature about reading/language arts is scarce or absent altogether. Half the teachers noted that colleagues or administrators refer to such materials every four months (33.1%) or never (17.3%), and an additional 6.9% did not respond. Just under half noted that administrators encourage such reading either quarterly (28.2%) or never (20.6%), and a tenth (10.1%) did not respond. Approximately two-fifths of the teachers claimed to receive these two forms of professional support weekly or monthly.

Although 13.3% of the teachers chose not to comment on the extent to which research in reading/language arts influences their classroom teaching, four-fifths noted varying degrees of influence: more than two-fifths (43.6%) noted weekly or monthly influence, and a little over a third (35.9%) noted quarterly influence. Close to a tenth (7.3%) indicated that research in this area does not influence their teaching practices.

Change in Teaching Practice (Item I[J, K])

Nearly all teachers (90.7%) observed changes in their teaching practice in reading/language arts over the past five years. In identifying factors contributing to these changes, three-quarters (75.8%) of the teachers credited professional development sessions/activities, and almost three-fifths (58.9%) acknowledged the influence of their own professional reading/study. Teachers also attributed changes in their teaching practice to: colleagues' suggestions (selected by 47.2%), change in divisional/school policy/philosophy (selected by 43.1%), and curriculum guides (selected by 29.0%).

Close to a tenth (8.9%) of the teachers specified other factors influencing changes in their teaching practices. Of the thirty-five comments made, nine referred to a change in teaching situation (e.g., change in time allocation, school, grade), eight observed the influence of students' needs/abilities/interests, seven focused on the impact of personal experiences/ interests/observations, four highlighted the Child-Centered Experience-Based Learning approach, three credited the influence of others (e.g., resource teachers, colleagues in other schools), two referred to the whole language approach, and two noted in-service participation.

Teacher Qualification Rating (Item I[L])

The final item in the "Teacher Training and Professional Development" section of the questionnaire asked teachers to rate their own qualifications to teach grade 4 English Language Arts, taking into account their university education, professional development and past experience. A little over half the teachers (54.8%) rated themselves as "qualified" and close to two-fifths (37.5%) rated themselves as "very qualified." The rest either felt they were "inadequately qualified" (1.2%) or gave no response (6.5%).

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

The second section of the Teacher Questionnaire focused on the organization of the English Language Arts program in schools, the influence teachers have in making decisions regarding English Language Arts programming, and the availability of support services for English Language Arts teachers.

Organization of English Language Arts Program (Items II[A, B, C, D, E, F])

Of the teachers participating in the survey, over half (54.0%) indicated they were teaching grade 4 English Language Arts by "assignment, " whereas just over a third (34.3%) were doing so by "choice" and just under a tenth (9.3%) by "negotiated choice" (2.4% did not respond).

As shown in Table 23 below, survey respondents reported that during the 1991-92 school year they were teaching a median of one English Language Arts class (53.2% of the teachers were teaching one class, 12.5% were teaching two classes, 16.5% were teaching three or more classes, and 17.7% did not respond), and had a median of 22 English Language Arts students (12.5% of the teachers had from one to fourteen students, 76.2% had from fifteen to thirty, 9.3% had more than thirty, and 2.0% did not respond). In 1991-92, the "median" grade 4 English Language Arts teacher taught in a school operating on a 6-day cycle, within which a total of 175 minutes (or 30 minutes per day) were available as preparation time, and 480 minutes (or 84 minutes per day) were allotted to each English Language Arts class being taught. The recommended time allotment for grade 4 English Language Arts in English Language schools is as follows: 500 minutes per 5-day cycle (or 100 minutes per day); with a second language 350 minutes per 5-day cycle (or 70 minutes per day). Thus, the median time allotments for a specific class reported by survey respondents falls within the recommended time allotment.

TABLE 23

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION PROFILE (1991—92)
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Survey Questions	Teacher Responses	
	Mean	Median
• How many days are in your school cycle?	5.9	6.0
• How many minutes are allotted to each grade 4 English Language Arts class you teach?		
per cycle:	437.1	480.0
per day:	75.3	84.0
• How many minutes preparation time do you have?		
per cycle:	144.2	175.0
per day:	24.9	30.0
• How many English Language Arts classes do you teach this year?	2.7	1.0
• To how many students do you teach English Language Arts this year?	22.8	22.0

Teacher Influence in Decision Making (Item II[G])

Teachers were requested to rate the degree of influence they have over various decisions concerning the organization and teaching of grade 4 English Language Arts in their respective schools. According to the teacher responses reported in Table 24 below, little more than a third of the teachers feel they have ''great influence'' regarding the overall time allotment of the English Language Arts program; however, just over four-fifths consider themselves to have extensive influence over the division of time for the various dimensions of the English Language Arts program.

TABLE 24

TEACHER INFLUENCE OVER DECISIONS CONCERNING THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Area of Influence	Great Influence	Some Influence	Little/No Influence	NR
• Choice of teaching methods/strategies	85.5%	13.3%	0.8%	0.4%
• Choice of learning strategies to teach	84.7	13.7	1.2	0.4
• The division of time within the ELA's time allotment (reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, language study, literature)	81.5	14.1	3.2	1.2
• Choice of evaluation methods/instruments	75.4	23.0	0.8	0.8
• Choice of teaching materials/reading program	68.1	28.2	3.2	0.4
• The overall time allotment	36.7	31.9	30.2	1.2
• Materials added to the school library	32.7	59.7	6.9	0.8
• The amount and kind of professional development	28.2	57.7	13.7	0.4

The survey data indicate that teachers see themselves as having the greatest degree of influence over decisions directly related to their individual approach to teaching/learning. For example, over four-fifths of the teachers claimed to have "great influence" over choice of teaching methods/strategies and choice of learning strategies to teach. Teachers appear to have slightly less influence in other areas related to teaching content and curriculum implementation: just over two-thirds of the teachers reported having "great influence" over choice of teaching materials/reading program, and approximately three-quarters gave the same rating with respect to choice of evaluation methods/instruments.

The survey responses further suggest that teachers feel they have significantly less decision-making power in relation to teaching resources. Less than a third of the teachers viewed themselves as having a great deal of influence over the selection of school library materials or over the amount and kind of professional development available to them. Only 3.6% of the teachers noted other areas in which they have and/or lack influence, although no specific comments were made.

Availability of Support Services (Item II[H])

Survey participants were given an opportunity to comment on the extent to which specific types of support services are available in their schools, choosing one of three response options: "very available," "available," and "not available." When reviewing the teacher ratings reported in Table 25 below, it is important to keep in mind that the availability of resources is dependent upon the size, clientele needs and policy decisions of schools/divisions represented in the survey.

TABLE 25

TEACHER RATING OF AVAILABILITY OF SUPPORT SERVICES IN SCHOOLS
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Type of Support Service	Very Available	Available	Not Available	NR
• Resource teacher(s)	27.4%	58.1%	12.5%	2.0%
• Teacher aide(s)	25.8	60.1	11.7	2.4
• Library technician(s)	17.7	35.5	41.5	5.2
• Qualified teacher librarian(s)	14.1	21.4	60.9	3.6
• Divisional consultant(s)	7.3	60.1	27.0	5.6
• Speech pathologist(s)	7.7	85.9	4.0	2.4
• Special education teacher(s)	6.5	27.0	59.3	7.3
• Department head or team leader(s)	2.8	17.3	72.2	7.7

The majority of teachers reported the unavailability of department head or team leaders, qualified teacher librarians, and special education teachers. Between a quarter and a half also noted that library technicians and divisional consultants were "not available." Only two of the support services were reported to be readily available by more than a quarter of the teachers: teacher aides and resource teachers. Speech pathologists, although "available" to most teachers, were "very available" to only a few. A small percentage of teachers (5.6%) rated the availability/unavailability of other types of support services. Four individuals elaborated on the support services listed in the questionnaire and five commented on the assistance of parents, school principal, psychologist, and experienced language arts teachers.

THE CURRICULUM

In addition to requesting information on the availability of the Early Years English Language Arts curriculum documents (item III[A]), the third section of the Teacher Questionnaire asked teachers to estimate the extent to which they understand and use the English Language Arts curriculum (items III[B,C]) and assess the need for revision of the Early Years English Language Arts curriculum documents (item III[D]).

Table 26 below shows that nearly all teachers claimed to have a copy of both the *English Language Arts: Overview K—12* (1988) and the *English Language Arts: Early Years* (1982) curriculum guide. A substantial majority of teachers professed to make infrequent or no use of these publications. The survey data reveals that the *Early Years* guide is used weekly/monthly by less than a third of the teachers, while the *Overview K—12*, which outlines the fundamental goals and objectives of the curriculum, is used weekly/monthly by under a fifth.

TABLE 26

AVAILABILITY AND TEACHER USE OF CURRICULUM DOCUMENTS

English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Curriculum Document	Teacher Has Copy				Teacher Uses Document				
	Yes	No	N/A	NR	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Never	NR
• *English Language Arts: Overview K—12* (1988)	88.7%	8.1%	0.0%	3.2%	2.4%	15.7%	54.8%	17.3%	9.7%
• *English Language Arts: Early Years* (1982)	89.9	7.3	0.0	2.8	4.4	25.0	50.8	11.3	8.5

The twenty-eight teachers who provided explanations of why they rarely or never use one or more of the documents cited a variety of different reasons, including the following: eight claimed not to have access to the document(s) in their classroom/school; seven made a distinction between using the documents regularly and consulting them as necessary (for example, familiarizing themselves with the documents upon receiving them, incorporating ideas for long range/yearly planning, using pertinent aspects of the curriculum); five criticized specific aspects of the documents, describing them as too philosophical, too general, vague, cumbersome, difficult to use, and lacking in specificity and practical application; three spoke of using the whole language approach; and two noted that the Early Years documents have limited or no relevance for their teaching situation.

One item in this section of the survey gave teachers an opportunity to rate the need for revision of the curriculum documents (item III[D]). As reported in Table 27 below, close to a quarter of the teachers rated *English Language Arts: Overview K—12* as unsatisfactory and close to a third rated *English Language Arts: Early Years* as unsatisfactory, a small majority of teachers noted satisfaction with both documents, and close to a fifth did not offer an opinion.

TABLE 27

TEACHER RATING OF NEED FOR REVISION OF CURRICULUM DOCUMENTS

English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Curriculum Document	Satisfactory/Does Not Need Revision	Unsatisfactory/ Needs Revision	NR
• *English Language Arts: Overview K—12* (1988)	58.5%	22.6%	19.0%
• *English Language Arts: Early Years* (1982)	52.4	30.2	17.3

Although only a small percentage of teachers reported making frequent use of the curriculum documents, over nine-tenths (91.5%) rated their knowledge of the grade 4 English Language Arts curriculum documents as "adequate" or "very adequate" (only 4.4% judged their knowledge to be "inadequate" and 4.0% did not respond). Furthermore, virtually all teachers (95.5%) considered themselves to have an adequate or highly adequate understanding of what grade 4 students should be doing in English Language Arts and of the teaching strategies appropriate for grade 4 English Language Arts (2.8% rated their understanding as inadequate and 1.6% did not offer a rating).

TEACHING MATERIALS

The "Teaching Materials" section of the Teacher Questionnaire inquired about the type, range, quality and availability of materials used in teaching grade 4 English Language Arts. The first item presented a list of ten different types of teaching materials and asked teachers to estimate the frequency with which they used the materials in their reading/English Language Arts program in the 1991-92 school year (item IV[A]). Table 28 below lists the respective teaching materials according to the reported frequency of "weekly" and "monthly" use combined.

TABLE 28

TEACHING MATERIALS USED IN READING/ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM (1991—1992)

English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Materials Used	Frequency of Use					
	Weekly + Monthly	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Never	NR
• Reference materials	85.9%	50.0%	35.9%	9.7%	0.4%	4.0%
• Content area material	84.7	61.7	23.0	11.3	0.8	3.2
• Computers	72.2	60.5	11.7	14.5	10.5	2.8
• Newspapers, magazines	69.8	24.2	45.6	23.4	4.8	2.0
• Videotapes/films, audiotapes	69.0	23.0	46.0	23.4	5.6	2.0
• Integrated language series	65.0	44.8	20.2	10.9	15.7	8.5
• Student-authored materials (e.g., anthologies)	64.5	28.2	36.3	26.2	4.4	4.8
• Basal readers	61.7	45.2	16.5	16.1	17.7	4.4
• Environmental print (e.g., ads, brochures)	46.4	14.1	32.3	39.1	9.7	4.8
• Trade literature	34.3	21.8	12.5	20.2	31.0	14.5

The survey results indicate that teachers are using a variety of different teaching materials in the grades 4 reading/English Language Arts program, although the frequency of use varies considerably. More than three-fifths of the teachers estimated that, during the 1991-92 school year, they made weekly or monthly use of: reference materials; content area materials; computers; newspapers/magazines; videotapes/films, audiotapes; integrated language series; student-authored materials; and basal readers. Less than half the teachers reported making frequent use of environmental print and trade literature.

Teachers were also invited to rate various factors influencing the choice and quality of English Language Arts materials used in the 1991-92 school year (item IV[B]). The ratings presented in Table 29 below indicate that over three-quarters of the teachers feel they have good or excellent access to a variety of materials and that the quality and relevance of available materials as well as the range of reading levels in these materials is good or excellent. About two-thirds of the teachers also gave ratings of good or excellent to: Canadian content of available materials; access to information about new materials; and access to commercial teacher guides.

TABLE 29

TEACHER RATING OF ACCESS TO AND CONTENT OF TEACHING MATERIALS
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Teaching Materials	Excellent + Good	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	NR
• Quality and relevance of materials available	82.7%	21.4%	61.3%	14.9%	1.2%	1.2%
• Access to a variety of materials	82.6	27.4	55.2	14.5	1.6	1.2
• Range of reading levels in available material	75.8	24.6	51.2	19.8	3.2	1.2
• Access to commercial teacher guides	70.6	19.0	51.6	22.2	4.8	2.4
• Access to information about new materials	65.7	14.1	51.6	26.2	6.9	1.2
• Canadian content of available materials	63.7	12.1	51.6	29.4	4.8	2.0

Over three-quarters (76.2%) of the survey participants noted that they are able to purchase materials not on the Manitoba authorized textbook list (item IV[C]). However, less than a fifth (16.5%) of the teachers indicated that their school has a review process for evaluating these materials (item IV[D]).

TEACHING PRACTICES

The purpose of this section of the Teacher Questionnaire was to obtain information on the range and balance of teaching strategies practiced by grade 4 English Language Arts teachers, and the importance educators ascribe to various reading activities, strategies and skills.

Teaching Strategies Used (Item V[A])

Survey participants were asked to specify how often they use various teacher-centered and student-centered activities in their teaching of reading/English Language Arts. The activities are listed in Table 30 below according to reported frequency of "daily" and "weekly" use combined.

TABLE 30

TEACHING STRATEGIES USED IN READING/ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

	Frequency of Use					
Strategies Used	Daily + Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Never	NR
Teacher-Centered Activities						
• Reading aloud to class	94.7%	76.6%	18.1%	2.8%	0.8%	1.6%
• Mini-lesson to whole class	94.0	60.5	33.5	3.6	0.8	1.6
• Large-group discussion	92.3	62.9	29.4	4.8	0.8	2.0
• Lecture to whole class (little discussion)	57.7	26.2	31.5	17.3	19.8	5.2
Student-Centered Activities						
• Small-group work for discussion/sharing/assignments	92.8	47.6	45.2	5.6	0.4	1.2
• Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR)	91.5	67.7	23.8	3.6	2.8	2.0
• Peer tutoring	78.2	38.3	39.9	13.7	6.0	2.0
• Reader response logs/journals	65.3	27.0	38.3	15.7	14.1	4.8
• Bulk reading	62.9	36.7	26.2	19.0	9.3	8.9
• Reading conferences	51.6	10.9	40.7	33.1	12.1	3.2
• Cross-age reading	46.8	15.3	31.5	21.8	25.4	6.0
• Readers theatre	7.7	0.8	6.9	41.5	44.4	6.5

The survey data suggest that teacher-centered strategies are commonly practiced in most grade 4 English Language Arts classrooms: more than nine-tenths of the teachers present mini-lessons to the whole class, lead large-group discussion, and read aloud to the class daily or weekly. The delivery of whole-class lectures is a less common practice than other types of teacher-centered activities: a small majority of teachers reported lecturing on a daily/weekly basis, while close to a fifth reported doing so monthly, and a fifth never do so.

Three of the eight student-centered activities were identified by over three-quarters of the teachers as being in daily/weekly use in their classrooms: small-group work (for discussion, sharing, and assignment completion), Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR), and peer tutoring. A small majority also reported making daily/weekly use of: reader response logs or journals, bulk reading, and reading conferences, although approximately a tenth never make use of these activities. Over a quarter of the teachers indicated that they never use cross age reading and close to half never include readers theatre in the reading/English Language Arts program.

Importance of Teaching Practices (Item V[B])

The second item in this section of the questionnaire asked teachers to rate the importance of various instructional objectives/goals, reading activities/strategies, and process skills currently emphasized in the reading/English Language Arts curriculum. According to the survey responses, reported in Table 31 below, each aspect of the reading program listed in the survey holds a place of importance for virtually every teacher, only the degree of importance varies.

The majority of teachers assigned a rating of "very important" to ten of the eleven reading program components listed: more than four-fifths of the teachers emphasized the importance of variety of reading material, opportunities for personal response, oral discussion of materials read, and pre-reading activities and setting purpose for reading; more than three-fifths ascribed great importance to student understanding and use of specific strategies for reading different types of materials, differentiated learning experiences, collaborative learning experiences, flexibility of reading rate, and student understanding of the three major cuing systems in reading; and just over half considered oral reading fluency to be of great importance. Although student knowledge of literary concepts was rated as somewhat important by a small majority of the teachers, less than a third rated this dimension of the reading program as highly important.

TABLE 31

TEACHER RATING OF IMPORTANCE OF READING PROGRAM COMPONENTS
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Dimension of Reading Program	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	NR
• Variety of reading material	94.8%	4.4%	0.0%	0.8%
• Opportunities for personal response	86.7	12.5	0.0	0.8
• Oral discussion of materials read	82.7	17.3	0.0	0.0
• Pre-reading activities and setting purpose for reading	80.2	19.4	0.0	0.4
• Student understanding and use of specific strategies for reading different types of materials	71.0	27.4	0.4	1.2
• Differentiated learning experiences	69.4	27.0	0.8	2.8
• Collaborative learning experiences	66.1	32.3	0.4	1.2
• Flexibility of reading rate (silent reading)	64.5	33.5	1.2	0.8
• Student understanding of the three major cuing systems in reading	60.1	34.7	1.6	3.6
• Oral reading fluency	50.4	47.2	2.0	0.4
• Student knowledge of literary concepts	31.9	60.9	4.8	2.4

EVALUATION

In the "Evaluation" section of the survey, teachers had an opportunity to give their opinions as to the importance of a variety of products and processes for evaluating students in reading (item VI[A]). As shown in the ratings reported in Table 32 below, approximately two-thirds or more of the teachers ascribed some or great importance to each of the products and processes listed, which suggests that they value the use of a wide range of products and processes in assessing reading.

TABLE 32

TEACHER RATING OF IMPORTANCE OF EVALUATION PRODUCTS AND PROCESSES
English Language Schools (Grade 4)

Type of Evaluation	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	NR
Evaluations Focusing on Product:				
• Daily work assignments	89.9%	9.3%	0.0%	0.8%
• Reading/writing portfolios	75.8	24.2	0.0	0.0
• Projects/presentations	71.4	27.8	0.4	0.4
• Reading response journals or logs	53.2	40.3	6.0	0.4
• Bulk reading lists and experiences	37.1	50.8	5.6	6.5
• Informal reading inventories	32.7	56.9	10.1	0.4
• Oral tests	31.9	59.3	7.7	1.2
• Cloze tests	23.0	65.7	8.9	2.4
• Written tests or examinations	18.1	62.5	17.7	1.6
• Standardized tests	5.6	60.1	33.5	0.8
Evaluations Focusing on Process:				
• Attitudes to reading	89.5	9.7	0.4	0.4
• Observation	76.2	23.4	0.0	0.4
• Group participation	75.4	24.6	0.0	0.0
• Self-evaluation	62.5	34.7	2.4	0.4
• Individual conferencing	62.1	37.1	0.8	0.0
• Strategy evaluation	40.3	51.6	5.2	2.8
• Peer evaluation	23.8	57.3	17.7	1.2

Of the seven evaluation processes listed, five were considered by over three-fifths of teachers to be "very important" means of evaluating students in reading: attitudes to reading, observation, group participation, self-evaluation, and individual conferencing. Although peer evaluation and strategy evaluation held some importance for the majority of teachers, these two processes rated high in importance for only about a quarter and two-fifths of the teachers respectively.

More than two-thirds of the teachers gave a "very important" rating to three of the ten types of evaluations focusing on product: daily work assignments, reading/writing portfolios, and projects/presentations. Less formally structured products such as reading response journals/logs, bulk reading lists and experiences, and informal reading inventories were regarded highly by about one-third to just over half the teachers. The four types of tests ranked high in importance for only a small proportion of the teachers: oral tests were credited with great importance by less than a third of the teachers, cloze tests by under a quarter, written tests or examinations by under a fifth (nearly the same proportion dismissed these as unimportant); and standardized tests by only 5.6% (approximately a third did not credit them with any importance).

Twenty-one teachers (8.5% of the survey participants) responded to the invitation to comment on any other types of evaluation employed during the past year (item VI[B]). Approximately half the comments referred to the various types of evaluations listed in the questionnaire. Teachers also highlighted evaluations such as oral activities, listening exercises, written work, spelling tests, acting out student-authored plays, cooperative evaluation, games, checklists, and specific standardized tests.

The final question relating to student evaluation inquired about the percentage of time teachers spend in formative evaluation and summative evaluation respectively (item VI[C]). Based on their responses, grade 4 English Language Arts teachers spend a median of 60% of their evaluation time in formative evaluation, and a median of 40% in summative evaluation.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Survey participants were given an opportunity to make additional comments regarding the teaching of reading in grade 4 (item VII[A]). Just over one-fifth (21.0%) of the teachers responded with comments: eight teachers reflected on student needs or attitudes and six on teacher attitudes; ten made observations about teaching styles, approaches or techniques; two commented on the use of informal reading inventories; ten commented on reading materials (including novel studies); eleven offered suggestions and opinions regarding the curriculum; five focused on time limitations; and six identified professional development needs.

Teachers were also invited to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the grade 4 Reading Assessment (item VII[B]). Close to a third (30.2%) of the survey participants offered comments: six teachers cited reasons for feeling unqualified to make observations; twenty-six made positive comments and eight made negative comments about the assessment in general; nine focused on the student reading survey and four on the teacher questionnaire; four provided insights into various aspects of the scoring rubrics; one made favourable remarks about the use of focusing questions; seven expressed views on the difficulty level of the test; five made suggestions regarding the testing population; two made observations about student response; five commented on testing directions; three criticized the suggested time allotments for completing certain sections of the test; and seven focused on specific aspects of the test materials/tasks such as the drawing item, the story map, the letter, a narrative reading selection, and extension activities; and one commented on professional development. The teachers' comments will be useful in the development of future assessments.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (GRADE 4)

The Technical Advisory Committee reviewed the results of each component of the grade 4 Reading Assessment. The following discussion represents the committee's findings and conclusions drawn from the student reading test and reading survey results as well as the teacher survey results. A set of recommendations based on the committee's findings appears at the conclusion of the discussion.

STUDENT TEST RESULTS

Response Rate

The response rate was remarkably high for virtually every item on the grade 4 Reading Assessment, regardless of the type of task or response format required. This reflects a high level of interaction with the assessment reading materials on the part of students, as well as a readiness to process a variety of different texts at various cognitive levels.

Meaning Vocabulary Subtest

Students gave a strong performance on the Meaning Vocabulary subtest. In general, students were more successful at understanding words for which explicit contextual clues were available than those for which they were required to infer meaning from implicit contextual clues or from previous experience. Words conveying abstract concepts posed greater difficulty for students than those conveying concrete concepts. These findings are compatible with the concrete operational stage of development which characterizes many grade 4 students.

Literal Comprehension Subtest

Overall, the results for the Literal Comprehension subtest show that students have well-developed skills in deriving literal meaning from various types of text. Some areas of inexperience and/or weakness are, however, also apparent in student responses.

It may be noteworthy that the two multiple-choice items on this subtest (items 6 and 7) resulting in the lowest percentage of correct responses both dealt with expository text. Each of these items involved highly complex processing of expository text, and thus ranked high on the continuum of difficulty in literal comprehension. Item 6 demanded complex map reading skills which less than two-thirds of the students were able to perform successfully. Item 7, for which the majority of students chose incorrect responses, required students to synthesize information from a detailed schedule of hours of admission to the Fort Whyte Centre. As students were not actually planning to visit the Centre, they may have had limited interest in determining visiting hours. Moreover, since adults usually perform such a task for children, it is possible that the students had limited experience and/or prior instruction in sorting through this type of information independently. Nevertheless, the reading of various types of schedules is an expected classroom activity. The comparatively low performance on these items suggests that students need more classroom instruction and experience in reading expository texts such as schedules and maps.

Of the four open-ended items included on this subtest, the item requiring a drawing in relation to the poem resulted in the lowest percentage of complete responses. (Although little more than a quarter of the students provided complete responses, just over half provided partial responses). This was an innovative open-ended item in that it called for a mode of response other than writing. Some students may have been confused by the instructions asking them to draw "one picture" of an important section of the poem, including "as many details as possible." Furthermore, students may have lacked an internalized set of criteria for, or preconceived notions of, what constitutes a "successful" descriptive drawing of a reading selection. If drawing is not used as a tool for language reception and expression in the classroom, it is not likely to be evaluated either. To enable students to develop and practice reading comprehension, teachers not only need to encourage and provide opportunities for students to explore various modes of expressing reading comprehension (such as art, music, drama, and so on) but they also need to use these response modes in assessing students' reading comprehension.

Interpretive Comprehension Subtest

The Interpretive Comprehension subtest results indicate that by the time students are in grade 4 they have developed strong interpretive comprehension skills. A substantial majority of students demonstrated proficiency in inferring meaning from various types of text. This finding may be an indication that many teachers are using an appropriate variety and range of reading materials to enable students to develop inferential comprehension. It may also suggest that, in accordance with the curriculum emphasis on cooperative and collaborative learning, many teachers are exposing students to interactive experiences promoting and calling for interpretive responses/thinking. Teachers need to be encouraged to continue using and exploring appropriate materials, strategies and activities that foster the development of interpretive comprehension skills.

Critical-Reflective Comprehension Subtest

On the whole, students gave a promising performance on the Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtest. A significant percentage of students demonstrated effective critical-reflective comprehension skills, although many were unable to process their thinking fully or consistently at this cognitive level.

For one item (item 67) the question itself may have posed a problem for students, in which case the result may reflect an alternative subjective interpretation of a question rather than an inability to perform a task. This leads to enquiry about whether assessment questions should be preceded by discussion and/or exploration in order to clarify expectations. Given the developmental level of grade 4 students, responding to questions of a critical-reflective nature would be greatly facilitated by such an approach.

All but one of the items on this subtest called for written responses requiring students to express difficult ideas about various texts using language that may not have been present in the body of the text. Significantly, almost all students provided responses to the open-ended items and approximately two-thirds or more were credited with complete or partial success in their responses to each of these items. These data provide evidence that nearly all students attempted to explore the implications of text at a critical-reflective level, with the majority achieving complete or partial success. Nevertheless, the high percentage of partially satisfactory responses (along with the wrong responses) demonstrates that a large proportion of students have difficulty responding in written form to questions demanding critical-reflective comprehension. The results do not show whether students have deficiencies in critical-reflective thinking or whether they have difficulties expressing that thinking in written form.

Some caution must be applied in interpreting the results for this subtest. There is a possibility that student performance may not be reflective or representative of what is happening in the classroom. Grade 4 students may have experience discussing and expressing their critical-reflective comprehension using various modes of communication, yet they may have little experience providing written responses to questions demanding critical-reflective thought. Therefore, a testing situation using only written response may not have fully captured student skills in this area.

Reading Strategies and Process Skills Subtest

Several tentative conclusions can be drawn from the students' responses to the Reading Strategies and Process Skills subtest items. On average, a slightly higher percentage of students provided the expected responses for the items relating to during-reading strategies than for those asking about pre- and post-reading strategies. The observation that students' pre- and post-reading strategies may be somewhat less well developed than their during-reading strategies raises the question of whether the primary focus in the classroom is on strategies used while reading.

There is also evidence in the data that the majority of students do not identify prediction about a given text as a strategy they use prior to reading (items 24, 25, 26) or during reading (items 28, 65). While most students did not report the use of prediction, the results do not provide any clear information about the actual use of this strategy. Students may be using the strategy, but may not be conscious of doing so or may not be articulating its use.

These findings must be interpreted with some caution. It is important to note that students may have limited conscious awareness of their use of strategies and limited experience articulating what they are doing with respect to reading strategies. Some questions need to be asked when reviewing the data. Do the students' responses reflect a knowledge of what they are doing? Are students not using the various reading strategies? Are students using the strategies but not recognizing when they use them? Students may be doing pre-, during- and post-reading activities in the classroom but may not recognize instances when they apply the reading strategies independently (for example, the independent selection of a book involves prediction of what the book is about, but students may not recognize this as an application of a pre-reading strategy).

In some instances, the instructions preceding a question and/or the presentation or wording of a question allowed for diverse interpretations, which may have created confusion about the task required. Therefore, some of the results may be more of a reflection of a subjective interpretation than of an ability or inability to identify or apply a particular reading strategy. The open-ended response format might have been more appropriate for this type of activity in that students' thought processes might have been more evident.

Although the results for the Reading Strategies and Process Skills subtest are inconclusive, they do suggest that grade 4 students have limited knowledge about and/or experience with the kind of self-analysis that requires them to make a conscious assessment of their reading strategies, and provide feedback on their awareness (metacognition) of what they perceive themselves to be doing in the reading process.

STUDENT READING SURVEY RESULTS

Students' Self-Assessment as Readers and Enjoyment of Reading

When asked to rate their qualifications as readers, nearly half the students identified themselves as "good" readers and approximately a quarter rated themselves as "average" readers; however, over a quarter were not sure how to rate themselves as readers. This uncertainty suggests that many students are not accustomed to making this kind of self-assessment or value statement about their abilities as readers, and may be an indication that they regard their reading abilities non judgmentally. Asking students to describe their reading abilities might have been more appropriate than expecting them to rate themselves as readers.

On the whole, it appears that grade 4 students do perceive themselves positively as readers. This is reflected in the degree of importance reading has for them. Almost all students indicated that they enjoy reading, view reading as a good way to spend spare time, spend time reading for fun out of school, and like receiving books for presents; however, from a third to half the students chose the qualification "sometimes" in identifying these attitudes and habits.

Choice of Reading Material

Students appear to have a clear idea of the type of reading material they usually read on their own at home or at school. When given a list of fifteen different types of text, nearly three-quarters of the students selected four or more texts as their choice of reading material. Although the survey results suggest that the majority of students have the greatest interest in adventure stories, mystery stories and comics, they do not establish whether students read these materials because of personal preference or because these are the materials available to them. Regardless of students' reasons for reading these texts, it is important that educators examine the voices and values represented in these texts.

Book handling was the most commonly cited criterion influencing or determining choice of reading material. This finding gives a clear message that reading material, whether in the classroom, library, or elsewhere, needs to be organized and displayed in ways that facilitate student handling of the books as further encouragement to reading a wide variety of texts.

Shared and Extended Reading Experiences

Although reading appears to have great personal importance for grade 4 students, a high percentage reported having limited or no occasion to participate in shared and extended reading activities. Of particular concern is the finding that a substantial majority of students rarely or never have oral reading experiences at home. According to the survey data, only about a tenth of the students read a story to an adult and have one read to them by an adult at home on a daily basis, while the majority never or almost never read with an adult. Regardless of how students defined "story," the results are of concern in that they suggest oral reading may not be encouraged enough. Oral reading (reading to others and being read to) not only instills the value of reading, but also helps students develop fluency, vocabulary and syntax, bridge to more difficult text, acquire general knowledge, establish relationships, observe modelling, and develop long-term habits that encourage reading.

Despite the curriculum emphasis on cooperative and collaborative learning experiences, group work and discussion, only about half the students appear to have frequent (daily or weekly) opportunities to participate in teacher-initiated shared and extended reading activities in the English Language Arts classroom. Approximately half the students reported having infrequent or no occasion to: talk about or share what they have read with friends at school; work in pairs or small groups for reading activities; and write in a journal about something they have read. It is possible that these reading experiences occur with greater frequency than reported, given that varying interpretations of terms such as "reading activities" and "journal" may have been a factor in the responses (for example, students might have given different responses if these terms had been replaced by references to "learning/reading centres," "writing portfolios," and so on). Nevertheless, the data point to a need for a greater emphasis on shared and extended reading experiences.

Use of Reading Strategies

There is also evidence of insufficient teacher-facilitated use of specific pre- and post-reading strategies. According to the survey data, over half the teachers infrequently or never help prepare students for reading a story by asking them to talk about it prior to reading, or help them understand a story with the use of webs/story maps following a reading. Depending on the language used in their particular classrooms, students may have had varying definitions of terms such as "webs" and "story maps," a consideration which needs to be taken into account when interpreting the results.

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Teacher Training and Professional Development

Participants in the grade 4 Teacher Survey reported a median of fourteen years of teaching experience in total and a median of six years of experience teaching Early Years English Language Arts. This information suggests that many teachers currently teaching grade 4 English Language Arts have spent time teaching at other levels and/or in other curriculum areas.

An uncharacteristically high percentage of teachers did not respond to the item inquiring about the amount of academic training acquired in the teaching of English Language Arts and the teaching of reading. Those who did respond, reported very little recent academic training in these two areas. Teacher participation in professional development in reading/English Language Arts also appears to be low, with a median of ten hours being reported for the past five years. The rate of participation in professional development seems to be slightly lower than the amount of time made available. Ideally, teachers should spend more time on professional development in reading/English Language Arts, but this may not be practical given the multiple areas of responsibility of grade 4 teachers.

Virtually all teachers responded to the opportunity to rate their need for professional development in seven different areas. Whereas a vast majority registered some or great need for professional development on topics relating to the practical application of the curriculum (evaluation techniques for reading, strategies for specific types of text and reading processes, teaching approaches, and available reading materials), a smaller majority saw a need for professional development relating to the more theoretical aspects of English Language Arts (general philosophy of the curriculum, use of the grade 4 curriculum documents, and basic reading theory).

Over two-thirds of the teachers noted that their schools make professional reading materials available weekly or monthly; however, only about two-fifths indicated that administrators make weekly or monthly efforts to promote and encourage the reading of professional literature about reading/language arts. Only a small majority of teachers reported reading such literature weekly or monthly. These findings are of serious concern, particularly since language is the foundation of an integrated program of instruction at the Early Years. As educational leaders, administrators not only need to keep up with current literature about reading/language arts, but they also need to encourage the reading and discussion of such literature among teachers.

Given that teachers appear to have limited recent academic training and professional development in reading/English Language Arts and receive inadequate support from administration to enhance their knowledge in this area, it is perhaps not surprising that a substantial number of teachers (from almost a quarter to nearly half) reported having only a partial understanding of each of the major areas of reading instruction listed in the survey. It is noteworthy that just over half the teachers reported a partial understanding or lack of understanding of areas such as reader response, developmental reading, and reading cuing systems, yet few teachers saw a great need for professional development on basic reading theory which could provide knowledge in these areas. Varying interpretations of the terminology may account for some apparent inconsistencies such as these. In any case, a higher level of knowledge of reading instruction would be desirable.

Despite reporting limited involvement in academic and professional development activity in the five years preceding the survey, nearly all teachers observed changes in their teaching practice during that time, the majority attributing these changes to the influence of professional development sessions/activities and professional reading/study. Thus, teachers gave the most credit to factors which did not figure prominently in their reported activities.

Nearly half the teachers also credited the influence of colleagues' suggestions as a key factor in implementing change. This finding supports educational research which emphasizes the importance of the role of collegiality in promoting and shaping changes in teaching practices. One of the implications of this finding is that educational leaders may need to direct the focus of professional development activity towards long-term initiatives which facilitate teachers' collegial work.

Little more than a quarter of the teachers identified curriculum guides as a significant influence in shaping change. This observation raises the question of whether there is a correlation between the lack of importance/use of the curriculum guides in implementing change and the reduction in consultative services from Manitoba Education and Training. It may also point to the need for a comprehensive review of the construction of curriculum documents.

Taking into account their university education, professional development and past experience, virtually all survey participants rated themselves either as qualified or highly qualified to teach grade 4 English Language Arts. Considering that teachers reported little recent academic training or professional development activity, including little professional reading, in the area of reading/English Language Arts, it would appear that their qualification ratings were made largely on the basis of experience.

School Organization

The teachers' reports on the time allotted to each grade 4 English Language Arts class they teach is consistent with the time allotments recommended by Manitoba Education and Training. The question of whether schools follow the recommended time allotments may, however, be secondary to the question of whether the Department's current practice of providing time allotment guidelines for specific courses conflicts with its expectation of an integrated approach to curriculum implementation at the Early Years level. It may be time for a Departmental review of policy and practice in this area to ensure consistency with the stated intention of curriculum delivery.

According to the survey data, little more than a third of the teachers feel they have great influence over the overall time allotment. This, too, is incompatible with the integrated approach to curriculum implementation (language development) emphasized in the curriculum. In general, however, the teachers' ratings regarding the extent of their influence over decisions concerning the teaching of grade 4 English Language Arts suggest that teachers feel they have considerable influence over practical aspects of teaching (for which they also saw the greatest need for professional development). Teachers appear to have the greatest influence over choice of teaching methods/strategies and choice of learning strategies to teach. The extent of influence reported for these areas is encouraging if the methods/strategies chosen are consistent with the philosophical framework of an integrated, student-centered activity-based approach to language development. Surprisingly, the percentage of teachers who reported having great influence over choice of evaluation methods/instruments was lower than the percentage reporting great influence over choice of teaching and learning strategies. Surely teachers ought to have equal influence in each of these areas given that both instruction and evaluation are integral parts of the teaching/learning process.

A major concern surfacing from the influence ratings is that less than a third of the teachers feel they have great influence over the amount and kind of professional development available to them and over the selection of materials added to the school library. These two kinds of teaching resources are essential to the development of effective teaching practices at any time, but particularly at a time when major shifts in curriculum/educational emphases are taking place. It is imperative that teachers have greater influence in choosing library materials, especially since Manitoba schools are increasingly moving towards resource-based learning.

As well as reporting limited influence over decisions related to teaching resources, teachers reported limited availability of various types of support services in their respective schools. A substantial proportion of teachers (between one- and three-quarters) indicated that five of the eight services listed are "not available" in their schools. It is not clear how teachers interpreted the response option "not available." This option could have been interpreted in a number of different ways: not offered in the school; not accessible even if personnel are ostensibly available; not necessary/applicable (as determined by school size, local clientele needs, policy decisions and/or philosophy). For example, since Early Years teachers rarely work exclusively in one subject area, it is not surprising that nearly three-quarters of the teachers reported the unavailability of department heads or team leaders. Regardless of whether the support services exist, a high percentage of teachers feel they do not have access to them. Local jurisdictions should apply the survey data to their particular situations.

The Curriculum

According to the survey data, the majority of teachers make infrequent or no use of the curriculum documents that apply to grade 4 English Language Arts, *English Language Arts: Overview K—12* (1988) and *English Language Arts: Early Years* (1982). What is particularly disturbing to find is that almost a fifth never use the *Overview*, which outlines the foundational goals and objectives of the curriculum. As teachers carry the responsibility of implementing the curriculum goals and objectives, they clearly need to be more conscious of the relevance of the appropriate documents.

When given an opportunity to rate the need for revision of the curriculum documents, a small majority noted satisfaction with the guides and the rest either registered dissatisfaction or did not respond. The survey data reflecting limited use of and limited satisfaction with the curriculum documents may be an indication that it is time to consider a review of the Early Years English Language Arts curriculum documents.

There appear to be some contradictions in the survey data regarding teacher use and knowledge of the curriculum documents. Although few teachers reported making frequent use of the English Language Arts curriculum documents and few attributed changes in their teaching practices to the influence of curriculum guides, almost all teachers felt they had adequate or highly adequate knowledge of the documents, as well as an adequate or highly adequate understanding of what grade 4 students should be doing in English Language Arts and of the teaching strategies appropriate for students at this level.

Teaching Materials

The teachers' estimations of the frequency with which they use various teaching materials in the grade 4 reading/English Language Arts program suggest both positive and negative practices. A highly commendable finding is the apparent use of a wide variety of materials in the program. Clearly this supports the integrated approach to language development. It appears that teachers use reference materials and content area materials with the greatest frequency. The observation that a substantial majority of teachers make weekly or monthly use of student-authored materials and computers is encouraging. However, the data pointing to the possible excessive use of basal readers and limited use of trade literature are of some concern (although teachers may have had different interpretations of the terminology categorizing the various materials). In any case, teachers are not using any one type of material exclusively.

Over three-quarters of the survey respondents noted that they are able to purchase materials not on the authorized Manitoba Text Book Bureau catalogue list, yet less than a fifth indicated their school has a review process for evaluating these materials. While a large majority of teachers appear to be satisfied with their access to and with the content of available teaching materials, a third of the teachers reported having only fair or poor access to information about new materials. The apparent absence of a review process in most schools and the somewhat limited access to information about new materials suggests that teachers may need to acquire additional resources for reviewing materials and/or become better informed of the resources that are available (such as the documents, *Selection of Learning Resources: Policies and Procedures for Manitoba Schools* (1990) and *School Library Policy Statement* (1991), produced by Manitoba Education and Training). To encourage and assist teachers in continuing to choose appropriate teaching materials, the Department may need to make more widely known its criteria/process for evaluating and selecting materials (to ensure gender balance, representation of minority groups, and so on).

Teaching Practices

Some encouraging trends are evident in the data regarding the use of teaching strategies in the grade 4 reading/English Language Arts program. Teachers appear to be using a variety of both teacher-centered and student-centered activities in the classroom. It is encouraging to note that nearly all teachers frequently read aloud to the class and that mini-lessons to the class occur with much greater frequency than lectures to the whole class. The emphasis placed on small-group work for discussion, sharing and assignment completion is likewise commendable.

The results also warrant some concern. Although teachers reported using a variety of student-centered strategies, they still appear to favour teacher-directed activities. According to the survey responses, a significant percentage of teachers infrequently or never use student-centered strategies such as reader response logs/journals, reading conferences, cross-age reading, and readers theatre. Given that a student-centered program is fundamental to the curriculum, teachers need to continue exploring and initiating a more diverse range of student-centered activities, particularly interactive learning experiences. Teachers could incorporate a wide range of activities (such as working in pairs, literature circles) in addition to those listed in the questionnaire.

The teachers' importance ratings of various dimensions of the reading program also give cause for concern. For example, more than a quarter of the teachers did not ascribe great value to "differentiated learning experiences" (which honour the personal learning style of each child) or to "collaborative learning experiences" (which promote the development of inferential and critical-reflective thinking skills). Furthermore, "student understanding of specific strategies for reading different types of materials" was rated as only somewhat important by more than a quarter of the respondents, and "student understanding of the three major cuing systems in reading" was judged to be somewhat important by over a third. Considering that these aspects of reading are crucial to the development of metacognition, more teachers should regard them as very important. It is possible that a significant percentage of teachers do not place high value on student understanding and use of reading strategies and cuing systems because the teachers have insufficient knowledge in these areas, as suggested in their self-rated knowledge of reading instruction.

Evaluation

Some encouraging trends are reflected in the teachers' responses to the survey items addressing the evaluation of reading. Just as teachers appear to be using a variety of teaching materials and teaching strategies in the reading/English Language Arts program, so they appear to value the use of a variety of evaluation products and processes for evaluating reading. According to the survey data, formative evaluation appears to be gaining in importance.

The degree of importance ascribed to several forms of evaluation leaves room for concern, however. The data showing that three-fifths of the teachers credit standardized tests with some importance may be an indication that such tests are mandated by school divisions even at the Early Years level. Such a practice is incongruent with the Early Years curriculum and with current evaluation theory which emphasizes the importance of authentic evaluation.

A significant proportion of teachers (from approximately one-quarter to one-half) gave a "somewhat important" rating to such evaluation products and processes as reading/writing portfolios, reading response journals or logs, bulk reading lists and experiences, observation, self-evaluation, and strategy evaluation. If these are viewed as only somewhat important, they may be in danger of disappearing from the teaching repertoire. Teachers need to be given appropriate opportunities and support to develop their understanding of the importance and use of these products and processes for evaluating reading if these are to remain part of curriculum implementation. According to the survey results, teachers feel the greatest need for professional development on the topics of "evaluation techniques for reading" and "strategies for specific types of text and reading processes including content area reading strategies."

While teachers deserve commendation for using various forms of evaluation, they also need encouragement to explore a variety of evaluation strategies in addition to those identified in the survey. In the interest of accommodating and assessing various learning styles, representational systems and multiple intelligences, teachers need to promote not only written responses, but also other modes of expression.

SUMMARY OF GRADE 4 READING ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Student Test Findings

Overall, students appear to be more proficient at tasks requiring literal and inferential comprehension than they are at tasks requiring critical-reflective comprehension. This observation raises concerns about whether the instructional time spent on developing literal comprehension skills is disproportionate to the time spent on developing critical-reflective comprehension skills, and whether students are involved in appropriate experiences through which to explore critical-reflective reading tasks. The students' performance may be an indication that they have insufficient opportunities to engage in co-operative and collaborative reading experiences which are conducive to learning and applying critical-reflective thinking strategies/processes.

The grade 4 test results reflect a high level of proficiency in students' ability to understand explicitly stated meaning of a variety of reading materials. Many students, however, had difficulty responding to several items involving highly complex processing of explicitly stated information in expository materials such as maps and schedules. Furthermore, the high percentage of partial responses to the item asking students to produce a drawing to communicate their literal comprehension of the poetry selection may reflect a lack of experience in expressing reading comprehension in a mode other than writing. It may also indicate that students are not used to having this mode of expression assessed formally. Although students were expected to convey their literal comprehension of the poem, some of the drawings actually went beyond this expectation, demonstrating interpretive comprehension.

The strong performance on the Interpretive Comprehension subtest demonstrates that a large majority of students are skilled in inferring meaning from various types of text. The apparent achievement of the interpretive comprehension objectives by such a high percentage of students suggests that grade 4 students are being exposed to an appropriate variety and range of reading materials through which to develop their ability to infer meaning. The findings further suggest that students are being provided with opportunities to explore and offer interpretive responses through appropriate interactive experiences.

There is also evidence of students' ability to explore and evaluate the implications of a variety of texts; however, students appear to have considerable difficulty responding in written form to some open-ended questions requiring a critical-reflective consideration of reading material. The results do not demonstrate conclusively whether students are experiencing limitations in their critical-reflective thinking or struggling with the expression of their thinking in the form of written responses. Teachers will need to determine the nature of their students' difficulties.

Student performance on the Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtest is perhaps also an indication that students at this stage may require prior discussion and explanation of complex reading tasks in a written test situation. In any case, teachers need to recognize the limitations of expressing reading comprehension in written form and the need to provide students with encouragement and opportunities to use various expressive modes in developing and communicating reading comprehension.

Although the data resulting from the assessment of students' reading strategies and process skills are inconclusive, they suggest that students have inadequate skills and/or experience in observing and articulating their use of reading strategies at a conscious level. This finding draws attention to the importance of teaching students to recognize reading strategies and promoting experiences that allow students to practice, reflect on and articulate the use of the full range of reading strategies. In order to gain a more comprehensive and representative understanding of student abilities in this area, however, other innovative ways of exploring and assessing reading strategies and processes will need to be developed.

Implications of Survey Findings for Test Results

The teacher survey and the student reading survey were included in the 1992 Reading Assessment to give both teachers and students an opportunity to express their views on the importance and implementation of various aspects of reading in the English Language Arts program. In many respects, the teachers' reports of classroom practices may well be more informed and realistic than the students' accounts. Nevertheless, what students perceive to be happening merits serious consideration. Ultimately, both the teachers' and students' responses, and the apparent inconsistencies between them, must be viewed in the light of students' performance on the Reading Assessment and the English Language Arts curriculum guidelines.

According to the survey results, teachers are implementing the curriculum objective of exploring a wide variety of reading materials. The teachers' estimations of how often they used various materials in the 1991-92 school year reveal that expository texts (reference materials and content area materials) are the most commonly used materials in the grade 4 reading/English Language Arts program. Given that students had considerable difficulty with certain types of expository materials, teachers may need to assess whether they are using an appropriate range of expository texts and/or whether they are teaching the appropriate strategies for reading certain types of exposition.

Teachers also appear to be incorporating a variety of student-centered classroom experiences which should lead to stronger inferential and critical-reflective comprehension skills. Nearly all teachers reported making daily or weekly use of activities such as Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading and small-group work for discussion, sharing and assignment completion, and close to two-thirds reported making daily or weekly use of bulk reading. A significant percentage, however, indicated that they infrequently or never use other types of student-centered activities such as reader response logs/journals, reading conferences, cross-age reading and readers theatre. The reading survey results show that approximately half the students perceive themselves to have limited or no occasion to participate in shared/extended reading activities such as the following: talking about or sharing what they have read with friends at school; working in pairs or small groups for reading activities; and writing in a journal about something they have read. It appears that teachers need to continue exploring and promoting a more diverse range of student-centered activities, particularly interactive learning experiences.

The test results pointing to students' need for more guidance and experience in recognizing and using pre-reading activities and strategies may also have some support in the survey findings. In the teacher survey, four-fifths of the teachers ascribed great importance to "pre-reading activities and setting purpose for reading;" however, according to the students' perceptions, less than half the teachers make daily or weekly efforts to help prepare students for reading by asking them to talk about a story before they read it.

It may be argued that students do not necessarily understand the reading activities and strategies well enough to report on their use. Regardless of whether the student survey responses are an accurate reflection of classroom practice, the responses convey what students perceive to be happening. If the students' perceptions of reading practices do not correspond with the actual practices, teachers may need to concentrate on raising the use of reading experiences and reading strategies to a conscious level.

Just as the test results show students have inadequate conscious awareness of strategies used in the reading process, so the survey results suggest a significant proportion of teachers have insufficient knowledge of and place insufficient emphasis on the teaching and evaluation of strategies for different types of text and reading processes. Nearly all teachers registered some or great need for professional development in this area. Educational leaders have a responsibility to respond to the teachers' need for support in providing students with learning experiences that will enable them to strengthen their reading comprehension skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS (Grade 4)

Careful analysis of the grade 4 Reading Assessment results has led to the following recommendations related to curriculum and professional development. These recommendations are expected to form the basis for provincial and divisional action plans designed to improve reading instruction in Early Years.

Because reading is a crucial dimension of every subject area, it is hoped that all teachers will be involved in this process. Moreover, since the role of the administrator as a curriculum leader is crucial to effecting change, it is expected that curriculum leaders will support teachers in the implementation of the recommendations which follow. The group or groups targeted by each recommendation is/are identified after each recommendation.

LEGEND

T = Teachers
S = Schools
D = School Divisions
M = Manitoba Education and Training
F = Faculties of Education

I. CURRICULUM

A. Development

To ensure that curriculum documents are more useable by teachers, it is recommended that:

1. Manitoba Education and Training review existing and developing curriculum documents in the light of educators' concerns about: time allotments/curriculum overload; Early Years/English Language Arts philosophy; and implementation approaches. M

B. Implementation

1. Curriculum Materials

To ensure that educators access the relevant information in curriculum documents in planning instruction, it is recommended that:

a. teachers make regular use of current curriculum documents in planning, delivering and assessing daily instruction. T

LEGEND

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2. Student Reading Materials

To ensure the use of a wide variety of appropriate student reading materials, it is recommended that:

a.	teachers and curriculum leaders be actively involved in selecting and displaying a wide variety of reading materials for students; students' book handling be encouraged through appropriate display techniques;	T, S, D
b.	Manitoba Education and Training remind teachers of its selection criteria/process;	M
c.	Manitoba Education and Training continue to involve educators in the selection of reading materials for listing in the Manitoba Text Book Bureau catalogue;	M
d.	school divisions write and implement their own materials selection policies, with input from teachers, based on the model provided by Manitoba Education and Training.	T, S, D

3. Instruction

To ensure continued improvement in students' reading achievements, especially in the higher level objectives of critical-reflective comprehension, it is recommended that:

a.	teachers continue using a wide variety of strategies, activities and resources which allow for differentiated student-centered instruction;	T
b.	teachers provide a balance of pre-, during- and post-reading strategies with a view to developing cognition and meta-cognition;	T
c.	curriculum leaders support teachers' use of a wide variety of strategies, activities and resources which allow for differentiated student-centered instruction;	S, D, M, F

LEGEND

T = Teachers
S = Schools
D = School Divisions
M = Manitoba Education and Training
F = Faculties of Education

d. universities continue to ensure that the strategies and practices which they promote are consistent with the provincially mandated curriculum; **F**

e. all educators encourage parents/adults to read regularly with and to children. **T, S, D, M, F**

4. Evaluation and Assessment

Since curricula, instruction and evaluation must be interwoven, it is recommended that:

a. teachers provide opportunities for students to explore a variety of expressive modes (such as art, music, drama, etc.) to develop, practice and evaluate reading abilities; **T**

b. curriculum leaders provide teachers with information and support in developing an understanding of a variety of expressive modes (such as art, music, drama, etc.) and their role in learning and assessing; **S, D, M, F**

c. curriculum leaders provide teachers with opportunities to develop an extensive repertoire of evaluation strategies and resources consistent with differentiated student-centered instruction. **S, D, M, F**

LEGEND

T = Teachers
S = Schools
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II. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Because support for teachers is critical in implementing many of the above recommendations, it is recommended that:

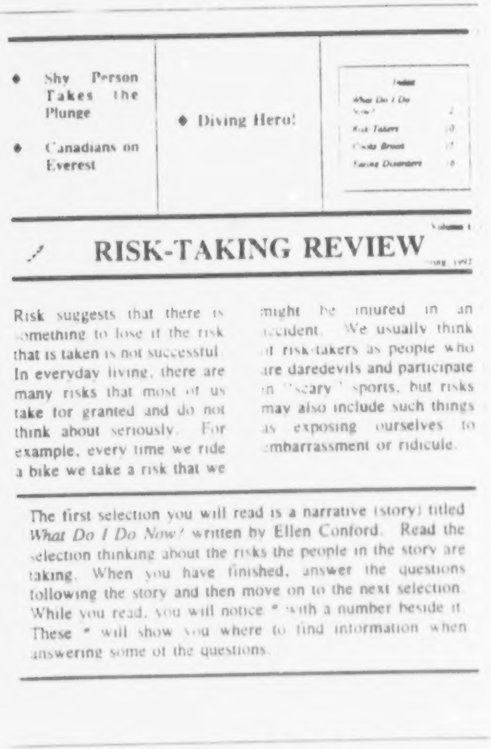
a. teachers keep their approaches to reading/language arts instruction current by accessing professional development opportunities, reading professional literature and collaborating with informed colleagues; **T**

b. curriculum leaders be pro-active in providing professional development opportunities, professional reading materials and support, and include teachers in professional development planning and material selection; **S, D, M**

c. universities make student teachers aware of current professional literature and emphasize the importance of continual updating throughout an educator's career. **F**

GRADE 8

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS



- Shy Person Takes the Plunge
- Canadians on Everest

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Volume 1

RISK-TAKING REVIEW

Spring 1992

Risk suggests that there is something to lose if the risk that is taken is not successful. In everyday living, there are many risks that most of us take for granted and do not think about seriously. For example, every time we ride a bike we take a risk that we might be injured in an accident. We usually think of risk-takers as people who are daredevils and participate in "scary" sports, but risks may also include such things as exposing ourselves to embarrassment or ridicule.

The first selection you will read is a narrative (story) titled *What Do I Do Now?* written by Ellen Conford. Read the selection thinking about the risks the people in the story are taking. When you have finished, answer the questions following the story and then move on to the next selection. While you read, you will notice * with a number beside it. These * will show you where to find information when answering some of the questions.

CHAPTER 5

STUDENT TEST AND READING SURVEY RESULTS (GRADE 8)

INTRODUCTION

The grade 8 Reading Assessment sought to determine the extent to which the reading objectives of the English Language Arts curriculum are being implemented by testing student performance in the following five areas:

- Meaning Vocabulary
- Literal Comprehension
- Interpretive Comprehension
- Critical-Reflective Comprehension
- Reading Strategies and Process Skills

These objectives formed the basis for the categorization of the test items into five cognitive subtests.

The specified reading objectives were assessed in relation to the following four types of text:

• Narration:	Ellen Conford, "What Do I Do Now?" (short story)
• Poetry:	Al Pittman, "Cooks Brook"
• Exposition:	Excerpts from Ralph Keyes, *Chancing It: Why We Take Risks*, and Bruce Patterson, *Canadians on Everest*
• Table:	"Survey Results for Possible Eating Disorders"

These reading selections, all addressing the theme of risk-taking, were reproduced in *Risk-Taking Review*, a journal issue produced specifically for assessment participants. Each of the selections was accompanied by brief introductory comments intended to help students focus their thoughts on the various aspects of the theme.

The final component of the student test consisted of a reading survey inquiring about students' attitudes towards reading, as well as their reading habits and activities in and out of the English Language Arts classroom.

In the *Risk-Taking Question Booklet* the test items were grouped according to the specific text to which they were directed rather than the objectives being assessed. The numbers presented may not always total 100% because of rounding-off. However, the test results reported below are presented by subtest, followed by reading survey data. The number presented may not always total 100% because of rounding-off or because the non-response rate is not reported. A frequency distribution of responses to each assessment item was provided in the *Preliminary Report*.

FOCUSING AND PRIOR KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONS

ITEMS: Multiple-choice: 1—9

In addition to being given introductory notes prior to each reading selection, students were presented with a set of nine introductory multiple-choice items, which were read aloud and paced by the teachers. The purpose of these items was to activate the readers' prior knowledge and assess their preparedness for understanding various aspects of the topic of risk-taking.

What is significant in the results for this section is the high rate of response: 99.3% or more of the students replied to each of the nine focusing statements. This indicates that most students were engaged in thinking about the topic of risk-taking at the start of the assessment, which was the intent of this section.

MEANING VOCABULARY

ITEMS: Multiple-choice: 16, 17, 18, 19, 29, 37

OBJECTIVE: **Meaning Vocabulary**

- Understanding words in context.
  - Explicit contextual use: the meaning is stated in the text.
  - Implicit contextual use: the meaning is suggested by the text.

Of the six multiple-choice items comprising the Meaning Vocabulary subtest, four related to the narrative, one to the expository text and one to the poetry. All the items directed students to a specific page in the *Risk-Taking Review*. An icon (☞) was placed in the margins of the reading material to help students locate the relevant context and alert them to a particular vocabulary item being assessed.

Understanding of the various words, expressions and phrases selected for the assessment was dependent on the students' ability to recall vocabulary meaning, or to gain literal meaning or metaphoric significance from the context in which the vocabulary was used. Four of the six vocabulary items were explicitly defined in the text. The meaning of the other two words was implied in the text.

RESULTS

Table 33 below shows the mean performance on the Meaning Vocabulary subtest to be 75.77%. The percentage of correct responses for the six Meaning Vocabulary items ranged from 58.1% to 91.9% (see Table 34 below). The majority of students understood each of the selected vocabulary items in context.

TABLE 33

MEANING VOCABULARY SUBTEST MEANS
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Subtest	Total Marks Per Subtest	Mean Raw Score	Mean Percent	Standard Deviation Raw Score
MEANING VOCABULARY	6	4.55	75.77%	1.31

TABLE 34

MEANING VOCABULARY
MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Item	Type of Text	Word/Phrase	Meaning	Percentage of Student Responses Correct
16	Narration	ingenious	Implicit	58.1%
17	Narration	take the plunge	Explicit	91.9
18	Narration	mudslinging	Explicit	70.0
19	Narration	introverted	Explicit	90.0
29	Exposition	recreational neck riskers	Explicit	79.6
37	Poetry	buoyant	Implicit	65.0

Over two-thirds of the respondents correctly identified the meaning of the three phrases or expressions ''take the plunge'' (item 17), ''recreational neck riskers'' (item 29), and ''mudslinging'' (item 18). In each case, the expression itself offered a literal or metaphoric clue to the concept it was meant to describe. Nearly all students successfully recalled or understood the meaning of the word ''introverted'' (item 19), for which a definition was supplied directly following the use of the term.

The words presenting difficulty for the greatest proportion of students were ''ingenious'' (item 16) and ''buoyant''(item 37). In both instances, the text provided no direct or paraphrased definition of these words. If students were unable to recall the meaning of these words, they were required to arrive at the correct definition through an understanding of the ideas and images within the text, a task accomplished by under two-thirds of the students.

Interpretation

The Meaning Vocabulary subtest results demonstrate that the vast majority of students have the ability to understand words whose meaning, whether literal or metaphoric, is explicitly stated in the text. Many students, however, appear to have difficulty with vocabulary whose meaning has to be inferred from implicit contextual clues.

LITERAL COMPREHENSION

ITEMS: Multiple-choice: 11, 12, 13, 24, 25, 26, 31, 56, 57, 58
Open-ended: E

OBJECTIVE: **Literal Comprehension**

- Understanding explicitly stated meaning.

Eleven items assessing students' literal comprehension skills were included in the grade 8 Reading Assessment, three relating to the narrative, five to the expository text, and three to the table. The information needed to respond to the Literal Comprehension items was provided directly within the text. Students were required to demonstrate the ability to read and retain and/or locate the necessary information/explanation within the text. With the exception of one open-ended item, all the items on this subtest were presented in the multiple-choice format. Students' responses to the open-ended item were matched against the responses outlined in the *Scoring Key*.

RESULTS

As shown in Table 35 below, the mean performance on the Literal Comprehension subtest was 76.10%, which takes into account the results for the ten multiple-choice items and the one open-ended item reported in Table 36. The percentage of correct responses to the multiple-choice items ranged from 68.0% to 90.9%.

TABLE 35

LITERAL COMPREHENSION SUBTEST MEANS
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Subtest	Total Marks Per Subtest	Mean Raw Score	Mean Percent	Standard Deviation Raw Score
LITERAL COMPREHENSION	11	8.37	76.10%	1.85

TABLE 36

LITERAL COMPREHENSION
MULTIPLE-CHOICE AND OPEN-ENDED ITEMS
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS		
Item	Type of Text	Percentage of Student Responses Correct
11	Narration	82.8%
12	Narration	83.3
13	Narration	88.9
24	Exposition	68.0
25	Exposition	80.4
26	Exposition	85.2
31	Exposition	77.4
56	Table	80.9
57	Table	90.9
58	Table	90.6

OPEN-ENDED ITEM		Percentage of Student Responses			
Item	Type of Text	Complete	Partial	Wrong	NR
E	Exposition	6.9%	3.9%	67.4%	21.7%

An exceptionally high level of accomplishment was shown in student responses to the multiple-choice items on the Literal Comprehension subtest, particularly those relating to the table and the short story. Each of the three items applying to the table depicting ''Survey Results for Possible Eating Disorders'' required a literal reading of columns of statistical information (items 56, 57, 58). Nearly all students demonstrated the ability to locate/identify the applicable statistical data using the explanations provided in the accompanying key. The primary challenge in replying to the three items concerning the narrative, which consisted of an exchange of correspondence between a student and an advice columnist, was to follow the sequence of narrated events, a challenge met successfully by more than four-fifths of the students (items 11, 12, 13).

The results for the four multiple-choice items concerning the expository texts (consisting of excerpts from books on skydiving and mountain climbing reproduced in the *Risk-Taking Review*) also indicate strong literal comprehension skills on the part of a large majority of students. In the instructions preceding these items, students were referred to specific sections of text containing the relevant information or explanations. Just over two-thirds of the students chose the correct response for one of these items (item 24) and over three-quarters selected the correct response for each of the remaining items (items 25, 26, 31). A possible explanation for the slightly lower results for item 24 is that the vocabulary used in the question was not synonymous with that used in the relevant section of the text.

In contrast, nearly all students either provided a wrong response or offered no response to the one open-ended item included on this subtest (item E). This item asked students to state three methods used by the author to draw the conclusion that most thrill-sport participants do not have a ''death wish.'' Students were credited with a complete response if they specified all three stated methods, a partial response if they gave two of the three possible answers, and a wrong response if they identified only one or no correct method. Since the terms used in the question (e.g., ''methods,'' ''conclusions'') were not synonymous with the context in which the methods are stated, students may have had difficulty interpreting the question, in addition to having difficulty finding and extracting the information embedded within a lengthy paragraph. In any case, this item required a sophisticated level of literal comprehension.

Interpretation

Students performed remarkably well on nearly all the items included on the Literal Comprehension subtest, particularly on those items requiring a literal reading of the short story and the table. Overall, the results for the expository reading selections were lower than for the other types of text.

More than two-thirds of the students selected correct responses for each of the ten multiple-choice items; however, over two-thirds provided wrong responses for the one item requiring an open-ended response and approximately a fifth offered no response. A partial explanation for the weak performance on the open-ended item may be that students had difficulty with the wording or structure of the question, which also may have been a factor in the comparatively low score for one of the multiple-choice items (item 24). In any case, the open-ended responses suggest that students did not employ appropriate strategies to construct meaning from the expository text.

INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION

ITEMS: Multiple-choice: 10, 14, 27, 28, 30, 36, 59, 60
Open-ended: B, F(i), I(i & ii)

OBJECTIVE: **Interpretive Comprehension**

- Inferring meaning not actually stated.

Unlike the Literal Comprehension subtest which inquired about details stated directly within the text, the Interpretive Comprehension subtest focused on meaning suggested or implied in the reading selections. The eleven questions designed to assess readers' interpretive comprehension were presented in the two standard formats (with eight multiple-choice and three open-ended items), and applied to all four genres (three to the narration, four to the exposition, two to the poetry, and two to the table). Open-ended responses were matched against the responses outlined in the *Scoring Key*.

RESULTS

The mean performance on the Interpretive Comprehension subtest, including the eight multiple-choice and three open-ended items, was 58.67% (see Table 37 below).

TABLE 37

INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION SUBTEST MEANS
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Subtest	Total Marks Per Subtest	Mean Raw Score	Mean Percent	Standard Deviation Raw Score
INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION				
• Multiple-Choice	8	4.81	60.16%	1.76
• Open-Ended (Rubric)	3	1.64	54.69	0.85
TOTAL	11	6.45	58.67	2.30

Multiple-Choice Items

As shown in Table 38 below, the percentage of correct responses to the eight multiple-choice items ranged from 40.7% to 89.8%. Student performance fluctuated considerably from item to item, even within the various genres.

TABLE 38

INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Item	Type of Text	Percentage of Student Responses Correct
10	Narration	89.8%
14	Narration	50.0
27	Exposition	61.3
28	Exposition	61.3
30	Exposition	73.0
36	Poetry	40.7
59	Table	62.4
60	Table	42.8

Each of the two multiple-choice items relating to the narrative text (consisting of a series of letters presented in an advice column format) dealt with the motivation informing a character's action or decision. Nine-tenths of the students were successful in accounting for the initiation of the correspondence, which was alluded to in various ways in the first letter (item 10). In contrast, only half the students responded correctly to the item asking for an explanation of why a tutor agrees to instruct two individuals simultaneously (item 14). In responding to this question, students were expected to eliminate explicitly stated ostensible reasons in favour of the actual underlying reason conveyed through a description of more subtle actions, such as facial expression. While half the students (50.0%) chose the correct implicitly stated reason, nearly a third (32.2%) chose the most literal response.

A similar process was expected for the multiple-choice item regarding the poem, "Cooks Brook" (item 36). Students were asked to distinguish the greatest of several fears the diver in the poem associates with diving from the top ledge of a cliff into a brook containing a dangerously projecting shelf of rock. Approximately two-fifths correctly identified the primary, implied social risk of failure or humiliation in backing down from the challenge of diving; nearly two-fifths (38.7%) chose the more obvious, but secondary, physical danger.

Between three-fifths and three-quarters of the students responded correctly to the three multiple-choice items concerning the expository texts addressing various aspects of the topic of risk-taking. With respect to these three items, students were asked to: identify the likely derivation of the name, "low-pull contests," the meaning of which is implied in the term itself when used in the context of describing the sport (item 27); infer, from a specified list of significant attractions, the single greatest appeal for thrill seekers (item 28); and give a synopsis or summary statement of the obvious rewards of testing the limits suggested in a given text (item 30).

Two of the multiple-choice items applied to the table, "Survey Results for Possible Eating Disorders." Here, students were expected to isolate the figures substantiating or best supporting the survey findings suggested in the questions, a task met with unequal success: just over three-fifths of the students successfully identified the age group in which males have a higher percentage of eating disorders than females (item 59); and just over two-fifths identified the set of statistics providing the best proof that urban students are at greater risk of eating disorders than rural students (item 60). The latter item required students to assess the relevance of several sets of data.

Open-Ended Items

On average, more than a third of the responses to the three open-ended items were scored as complete responses (39.6%), close to a third were considered partial responses (30.3%), and just over a fifth (21.8%) were judged to be wrong responses on the basis of the scoring rubric provided (see Table 39 below).

TABLE 39

INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION
OPEN-ENDED ITEMS
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Item	Type of Text	Percentage of Student Responses			
		Complete	Partial	Wrong	NR
B	Narration	18.9%	66.7%	12.2%	2.2%
F(i)	Exposition	61.1	15.2	18.1	5.6
I(i & ii)	Poetry	38.7	8.9	35.0	17.4

Two of the open-ended items on this subtest anticipated observations based not only on the textual information provided, but also on prior knowledge and/or experience. Students performed exceptionally well on the item requiring a written explanation of what the author of one of the expository texts considers to be the reason teenagers take ''big risks'': approximately two-fifths of the students provided complete responses and close to a fifth offered partial responses (item F(i)). The one open-ended question applying to the narrative text asked students to explain how the main character demonstrates self-confidence in relating to a tutor. This task required an understanding of assertive actions contradicting the character's repeatedly stated self-concept as an ''introverted'' and ''extremely shy person.'' To obtain a partial response students were expected to note that the character makes a request to the tutor, whereas to rate a complete response they were expected to observe that the character not only makes a request, but also gives direction and shows persistence. While less than a fifth of the students gave complete responses, two-thirds were able to provide partial responses (item B).

The poetry-related task (item I[i&ii]), which required students to infer an image of the diver based on the images used to describe the diver's entry into the water, received a complete or partial response from just under half the students. Over a third gave a wrong response, and close to a fifth offered no response.

Interpretation

Responses to several of the items on the Interpretive Comprehension subtest suggest that half or more of the students have an inadequate understanding of the thinking strategy adjustment needed (or lack the cognitive skills required) to differentiate implicitly stated textual information from explicitly stated information (items 14, 36) and to sort relevant from irrelevant data (item 60). The more subtle the information, the more difficulty students had giving correct responses. A large proportion of students chose responses demonstrating a literal reading of the text where an inferential or interpretive reading was required.

Judging by the relatively weak performance on both the poetry-related items on this subtest (items 36, I(i&ii)), students experienced a great deal of difficulty interpreting the complex poetry selection independently. Furthermore, the results for the items relating to the table indicate that students had considerable difficulty manipulating and interpreting statistical data (items 59, 60).

CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE COMPREHENSION

ITEMS: Multiple-choice: 15
Open-ended: A(i & ii), C, D, F(ii), G, H

OBJECTIVE: **Critical-Reflective Comprehension**

- Considering and evaluating the implications of text.

This subtest challenged students to pursue critical-reflective thought to the assigned reading materials. The individual items on this subtest demanded an evaluation and interpretation of the text as well as an exploration of its significance beyond the apparent or immediate meaning. Reliance on prior knowledge and experience was an important factor in the process of gaining critical-reflective comprehension of the text.

Items examining readers' critical-reflective comprehension were applied to three types of text in the following proportion: four to the narration, two to the exposition, and one to the poetry. All but one of the seven items required an open-ended, as opposed to a multiple-choice, response. The open-ended responses were matched against the responses outlined in the *Scoring Key*.

RESULTS

As indicated in Table 40 below, the mean performance on the Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtest, consisting of one multiple-choice and six open-ended items, was 52.24%.

TABLE 40

CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE COMPREHENSION SUBTEST MEANS
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Subtest	Total Marks Per Subtest	Mean Raw Score	Mean Percent	Standard Deviation Raw Score
CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE COMPREHENSION	7	3.66	52.24%	1.44

The results for the individual items on this subtest are presented in Table 41 below. As noted in the table, the non-response rate of "no response" ranged from 0.0% to 18.0%. On average, close to a third of the open-ended responses were scored as complete responses (31.4%), over a third were rated as partial responses (35.3%), and just over a quarter were scored wrong (25.9%).

TABLE 41

CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE COMPREHENSION MULTIPLE-CHOICE AND OPEN-ENDED ITEMS

English Language Schools (Grade 8)

MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEM		
Item	Type of Text	Percentage of Student Responses Correct
15	Narration	71.5%

OPEN-ENDED ITEMS					
		Percentage of Student Responses			
Item	Type of Text	Complete	Partial	Wrong	NR
A	Narration	45.7%	47.4%	6.9%	0.0%
C	Narration	11.1	60.2	25.9	2.8
D	Narration	14.1	49.4	32.6	3.9
F(ii)	Exposition	50.0	23.1	19.8	7.0
G	Exposition	21.3	17.8	48.3	12.6
H	Poetry	45.9	14.1	22.0	18.0

The four narrative-related items encouraged students to examine and question the words and actions of the featured characters, observing various layers of meaning and significance. Nearly three-quarters of the students were successful in discerning the true motive behind the specified action of two characters, disregarding the apparent motive initially implied but later dismissed by the characters themselves (item 15). Most students also gave complete or partial responses to the question asking them to identify the fear underlying a character's reluctance to take a risk (item A). Nearly half the students were partially successful in identifying the personality characteristics reflected in the behaviour of two characters (item D), and three-fifths gave a partially satisfactory interpretation of the message(s) implied in the final advice given to the principal character (item C); just over a tenth provided complete responses to these two items, and over a quarter gave wrong responses.

For the poetry item (H) and for both the expository items (F[ii], G), students were expected to provide critical-reflective assessments of specified textual statements, a process requiring students to draw extensively on prior knowledge regarding the theme of risk-taking. A small majority of students gave fully or partially satisfactory explanations of why, after a successful "risk," people commonly behave as though there were "nothing to it," the way the diver in the poem behaves following a risky dive (item H). Just over a fifth of the students responded incorrectly and close to a fifth did not attempt to give a response.

Over two-thirds of the students gave complete or partial responses to the item calling for a statement of agreement or disagreement regarding an author's assessment of why teenagers take "big risks," with opinions to be supported with a reasonable, relevant defence (item F[ii]). In contrast, the majority of students offered either wrong or no interpretive explanations of what is meant by an author's assertion that "'Follow me Dad' are said to be the three most dangerous words in skiing" (item G).

Interpretation

The mean performance on the Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtest was lower than on any of the other subtests. What is encouraging in the results for this subtest is that approximately two-thirds of the open-ended responses were rated as complete or partial responses. However, the largest proportion of the responses ranked in the latter category, which indicates that students are providing insufficient support for their arguments.

The items on this subtest relying most heavily on personal opinion and reflection on prior knowledge/experience had a lower response rate than those calling primarily for an assessment of the assigned reading material. In formulating responses to these items, students were required to engage in the complex cognitive process of linking the reading material with their own knowledge/experience of the real world and vice versa. Clearly, many students need guidance in understanding and using this strategy.

READING STRATEGIES AND PROCESS SKILLS

ITEMS: Multiple-choice: 20, 21, 22, 23, 32, 33, 34, 35, 61

OBJECTIVE: **Reading Strategies and Process Skills**

- Recognizing the use of, and interaction between, the thinking and metacognitive strategies involved in the reading process.
- Adapting and varying the use of these strategies at a conscious level according to the demands of the text and/or reading situation.

The assessment of reading strategies and process skills is a relatively new area of assessment in Manitoba. Formally included for the first time in the 1992 Reading Assessment, this subtest was intended to assess and extend student awareness and use/selection of various interactive strategies involved in the reading process, as well as to reinforce student awareness of the need to examine reading strategies and process skills at a conscious level. In addition to being expected to observe, monitor and evaluate their own reading process, students were required to give close attention to the diverse techniques used in the assessment reading materials.

Since the specific strategies selected for assessment were chosen largely on the basis of the textual materials included in the Reading Assessment, the list of reading strategies assessed was neither comprehensive nor necessarily representative of the repertoire of strategies to which students need to be, or are being, exposed. Consequently, the results for this subtest may not be reflective of the full extent or range of students' abilities in the area. Given the innovative nature of this subtest, the results need to be interpreted with some caution.

All the items assessing students' reading strategies and process skills were presented in the multiple-choice format. Of the nine items included, one was applied to the table, and four each to the narrative and expository texts.

RESULTS

Table 42 below shows the mean performance on the Reading Strategies and Process Skills subtest to be 56.46%. The percentage of correct responses to the nine multiple-choice items on this subtest ranged from 16.7% to 85.7% (see Table 43).

TABLE 42

READING STRATEGIES AND PROCESS SKILLS SUBTEST MEANS
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Subtest	Total Marks Per Subtest	Mean Raw Score	Mean Percent	Standard Deviation Raw Score
READING STRATEGIES AND PROCESS SKILLS	9	5.08	56.46%	1.53

TABLE 43

READING STRATEGIES AND PROCESS SKILLS
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Item	Type of Text	Percentage of Student Responses Correct
20	Narration	60.4%
21	Narration	53.9
22	Narration	85.7
23	Narration	80.2
32	Exposition	16.7
33	Exposition	30.9
34	Exposition	35.0
35	Exposition	61.9
61	Table	83.5

A number of items focused students' attention on their own reading strategies. Two items assessed their ability to select an appropriate reading strategy/approach for specific textual content and judge its effectiveness for the reading purpose/task. Whereas four-fifths of the students were able to select an effective reading strategy for the narrative text (item 23), less than a third were able to do so for the expository text (item 33). When asked to identify a good strategy for reading the expository text, nearly half the students (49.1%) chose a strategy suitable for reading narrative.

The item focusing on the table required students to establish a strategy for finding or interpreting statistical data (item 61). More than four-fifths of the students accurately indicated that the first action in attempting to find information from a statistical table is to "read the title of the table and the symbol key at the bottom to get an idea of how the table is set up." According to these results, most students appear to understand that when reading a table, the title and symbol key are the main organizational elements guiding interpretation of the information.

Students were also assessed on their ability to ask good questions of the text as a strategy for understanding the reading material. A little over a third of the students correctly identified the question, from a choice of four, that would best check their understanding of a specified expository text (item 34). In another item, students were required to screen a list of four statements for subjectivity. Over three-fifths of the students were able to distinguish an opinion statement from a list of factual observations (item 35).

For the remaining items, students were expected to assess the intent or effect of stylistic strategies/techniques used by the authors of the narrative and selected expository texts. The item receiving correct responses from the highest percentage of respondents asked for an explanation of the author's purpose in varying the closing of the series of letters within the narrative (item 22): close to nine-tenths of the students noted correctly that the purpose is to show developments/changes in the main character's feelings. A correct response required a literal reading of the closing lines.

Students were also challenged to consider strategies used by the author of the narrative to convey the attitudes, perceptions and personalities of fictional characters. Approximately three-fifths of the students correctly observed that the author conveys the main character's sense of humour by having that character "use words and phrases in a humorous way," suggesting that these students have an appreciation of the use/effect of tone (item 20). Another narrative-related item anticipated recognition of a writer's methods of communicating the perspective or point of view of a character who has no direct voice in the story (item 21). Slightly over half the students accurately observed that it is more useful to look at accounts of direct encounters between the narrator and a secondary character than it is to consider the descriptions of or speculations about that character from the point of view of other characters.

The remaining item addressed the significance of presenting text in a particular style of type or type-face (item 32). Surprisingly, less than a fifth of the students correctly noted that the reason for the use of italicized words in a given expository text is to indicate to the reader that "they have been used in an unusual way"; almost two-thirds (64.1%) chose the more literal response, "they are the most important words in the passage."

Interpretation

Although the results for the Reading Strategies and Process Skills subtest varied significantly from item to item, the overall performance was almost the same for the items testing students on their own reading strategies as for the items assessing students' skill in reviewing the strategies/techniques employed within the selected reading materials. There are strong indications, however, that students have much greater difficulty processing expository text than they do processing narrative text. In one item, for example, approximately half the students selected a strategy appropriate for narrative in dealing with expository text, which points to a confusion of reading strategies. The subtest results further suggest that the majority of students do not know how to ask effective questions to monitor their comprehension of expository text.

STUDENT READING SURVEY

ITEMS: 38—55, J—N

The grade 8 Reading Survey sought to obtain information on students' attitudes toward reading, as well as on their reading habits. Students were instructed to base their answers on their reading in the English language. Sixty-nine multiple-selection items were included in the survey: for items 38-55 students were expected to select the correct response from a choice of four possible responses; for items J, L, M and N, each of which contained from seven to fifteen sub-items, students were required to check one of three possible responses—"often," "sometimes" or "never"; and for item K, respondents were asked to check all applicable sub-items from the choice of twelve.

RESULTS

Students' Self-Assessment as Readers

At the start of the reading survey, students were asked to evaluate their own reading competency (see Table 44 below). Nearly half the students rated themselves as average readers and almost two-fifths judged themselves to be good readers. The percentage of students viewing themselves as being good readers was nearly identical to the percentage indicating that no aspect of reading is difficult for them. While few students perceived themselves as having difficulty with the vocabulary in reading, approximately a third reported having the greatest difficulty "reading fast enough to finish as quickly as classmates," and close to a quarter felt they had the most trouble "understanding the story or article."

TABLE 44

STUDENTS' SELF-ASSESSMENT AS READERS
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Item	Response Options	Percentage of Students Selecting Response
38. In my opinion, I am:	a) a good reader.	38.5%
	b) an average reader.	45.2
	c) a poor reader.	5.6
	d) not sure what kind of reader I am.	10.0
39. What do you find most difficult in reading?	a) Understanding the story or article.	23.1
	b) Reading the words.	5.2
	c) Reading fast enough to finish as quickly as classmates.	32.4
	d) No aspect of reading is difficult.	38.1

Reading Enjoyment

Survey results suggest a correspondence between reading competency and enjoyment of reading. For example, the proportion of students who professed to enjoy reading "often" (42.4%) and "sometimes" (51.3%) (item J[i]) corresponds closely with the proportion rating themselves "good" (38.5%) and "average" (45.2%) readers. Nearly all students claimed to find some enjoyment in reading. Most students also reported spending some time reading for pleasure out of school (item 42), the frequency ranging from daily or almost daily (32.8%), to two or three times a week (28.3%), once a week or less (23.3%), or never/almost never (14.6%).

Source of Reading Material

The survey reveals that the vast majority of grade 8 students own books (not including school books or comic books), with nearly half owning more than thirty books—46.5% of the students professed to own "more than thirty" books, 16.5% own "twenty-one to thirty," 18.9% own "eleven to twenty," and 17.4% own "ten or less"—item 40. As shown in Table 45 below, three-quarters of the students spend their own money on reading materials, and two-thirds trade or share reading materials with friends. Libraries, however, are the most commonly used resource for obtaining reading material. Library resources are used particularly for the purpose of looking up information for school, but also to find materials to read for fun and to help with hobbies or personal interests. Although virtually all students borrow books from their school or class library, the frequency with which they do so varies widely—29.6% borrow books "every few days," 38.5% do so "about once a month," 20.6% do so "a couple of times a year," 10.4% "never or almost never" do so—item 43.

TABLE 45

SOURCE OF READING MATERIAL
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Item L	Resource	Frequency of Use			
		Often	Sometimes	Never	NR
(i)	Spend own money	14.8%	59.4%	25.4%	0.4%
(vii)	Trade/share with friends	22.4	42.6	33.5	1.5
(iv)	Use library—read for fun	34.6	43.1	21.3	0.9
(v)	Use library—information for school	46.7	45.2	7.4	0.7
(vi)	Use library—hobbies/interests	17.4	44.1	37.4	1.1

Types of Reading Material

The survey results suggest differences in student reading habits in and out of school. Students were asked to indicate, from a list of twelve kinds of text, the type of reading they do out of school (item K[i-xii]). Based on the percentage of respondents checking the individual texts as applicable, students in grade 8 have the strongest inclination to read magazines outside of school. Students ranked the twelve selected texts as listed in Table 46 below.

TABLE 46

TYPE OF MATERIAL STUDENTS READ OUT OF SCHOOL
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Item K	Type of Reading Material	Percentage of Students Selecting Reading Material
(iv)	Magazines	90.7%
(i)	Comics	72.8
(ii)	Fiction (e.g., novels, short stories, plays)	71.5
(v)	Newspapers	69.6
(x)	Advertisements, signs, and menus	69.1
(viii)	Schedules (e.g., bus, swimming pool, TV)	57.8
(vii)	Directions or instructions (e.g., how to build/improve...)	53.3
(xii)	Computer screen reading (e.g., games, tutor programs)	52.6
(xi)	Maps, charts and graphs	38.9
(vi)	Non-fiction (e.g., science articles, biographies)	30.6
(ix)	Forms (e.g., applications)	30.0
(iii)	Poetry	24.4

In another related item, students were requested to note the frequency with which they read specific materials (item L[ii, iii, viii, ix]). More than four-fifths of the respondents noted they ''often'' or ''sometimes'' read the following: material related to a television show or a movie (88.1%); parts of the newspaper besides the comics or sports (84.7%); and news in a magazine or newspaper (91.5%). Furthermore, approximately nine-tenths (88.5%) of the students indicated they ''often'' or ''sometimes'' read more than one book by the same author.

Some differences emerge when comparing the above results with student responses to the item asking how often they read various types of text in school (item M[i-xv]). Based on the percentage of respondents who reported reading the selected texts ''often'' or ''sometimes,'' in-school reading of the respective materials occurs in the order of frequency presented in Table 47 below.

TABLE 47

TYPE OF MATERIAL STUDENTS READ IN SCHOOL
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Item M	Type of Reading Material	Frequency of Reading			
		Often + Sometimes	Often	Sometimes	Never
(i)	Part of a novel, short story or story	97.5%	50.6%	46.9%	2.2%
(ii)	Directions or instructions	89.0	59.6	29.4	9.6
(iv)	Schedules	86.5	49.8	36.7	11.9
(viii)	Maps, charts, graphs	85.4	31.9	53.5	13.0
(ix)	Magazines	82.1	34.1	48.0	16.5
(iii)	Poems	80.0	20.2	59.8	18.7
(x)	Computer screens (games, tutor programs)	78.7	29.1	49.6	20.0
(vi)	Advertisements	69.8	20.0	49.8	28.5
(xiv)	Sports materials	67.6	29.6	38.0	31.1
(xii)	Science articles	66.7	17.8	48.9	31.9
(vii)	Newspapers	59.8	15.0	44.8	38.9
(v)	Plays	55.9	7.0	48.9	42.8
(xv)	Words to a song	55.6	16.7	38.9	42.8
(xi)	Biographies	49.1	5.4	43.7	48.3
(xiii)	''How-to'' books	41.3	8.0	33.3	56.9

By far the greatest percentage of students specified that they read the various texts ''sometimes'' (item M[i-xv]—26.3% ''often,'' 44.7% ''sometimes'' and 27.5% ''never''). The high percentage of respondents choosing the category ''sometimes'' with respect to the various types of texts suggests that students are reading a wide range of materials; they are not restricting their reading to a few types of texts to the exclusion of others. These survey findings are an indication that the curriculum objective of balancing a wide variety of reading materials is being pursued and/or achieved in many classrooms, even though a substantial percentage of students indicated that they ''never'' read the respective materials.

Most students reported having infrequent opportunities to choose what they will read in their English Language Arts class (item 49). Survey responses show that approximately one-fifth of the students are given a choice of reading material every class or almost every class (20.9%), once a week or more (21.7%), or at least once a month (19.8%), while more than a third (35.9%) are able to choose reading materials only a few times a year. Reading in the form of homework occurs with much greater frequency (item 45). Approximately a third of the students (31.1%) read something for homework daily or almost daily. The remaining students do homework-related reading two or three times a week (33.7%), once a week or less (25.0%), or never/almost never (8.9%).

Types of Reading Activities

Having teachers read literature aloud to the class appears to be a common experience for the majority of students (item 46). Nearly two-thirds (63.3%) of the survey respondents reported that their English Language Arts teacher reads aloud to the class from once a week to every day (20.2% of the teachers do so "at least once a month" and 15.0% do so "a few times a year"). In contrast, just over a quarter (28.3%) of the students indicated that they "often" read aloud in class, while just over half (54.6%) "sometimes" do so, and close to a fifth (16.5%) "never" do so (item N[vi]).

Survey participants were asked to specify how often they participate in selected reading experiences in English Language Arts classes. The results show that individual reading experiences are much more common than shared reading experiences. Judging from the percentage of students indicating that they "often" participate in the specified experiences, in-class reading experiences occur in the following order of frequency (item N[i-vii]):

- silent reading (66.9%)
- reading to answer written questions (54.1%)
- reading to find information for research project or report (34.6%)
- oral reading (reading aloud) (28.3%)
- reading to prepare for oral discussion or oral reports (25.6%)
- reading to respond in a journal or log (21.7%)
- shared reading (pairs, literature circle) (19.8%)

According to student responses, shared reading is the least commonly practiced reading activity in the classroom. In another related item, only a little over a quarter (27.0%) of the students reported being given weekly to daily opportunities to work in pairs or small groups for reading activities (43.5% reported having such opportunities "at least once a month," and 28.5% "never or almost never" have such opportunities—item 52).

Several survey items focused further on extending reading activities through discussion at home and at school (see Table 48 below). The results reveal that 6.5% of the students talk about their reading at home almost every day, just over a quarter do so once or twice a week, over a quarter do so once or twice a month, and over a third never or almost never engage in reading-related discussion at home (item 41). When asked to indicate how often they talk or write about their reading in school, 8.7% noted they share something daily/almost daily, a quarter share something two or three times a week, and almost two-fifths do so once a week or less, and just over a quarter indicated that they never or almost never share their reading experiences in school (item 44).

TABLE 48

FREQUENCY OF COMMUNICATION ABOUT READING
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Item	Response Options	Percentage of Students Selecting Response
41. How often do you talk with someone at home about something you read?	a) Almost every day.	6.5%
	b) Once or twice a week.	26.1
	c) Once or twice a month.	28.9
	d) Never or almost never.	37.6
44. In school, how often do you share something you have read either through talking or writing?	a) Every day or almost every day.	8.7
	b) Two or three times a week.	24.8
	c) Once a week or less.	39.4
	d) Never or almost never.	26.1

The survey also inquired about student participation in teacher-initiated opportunities to extend reading experiences through personal written responses (item 54) and through projects and activities such as drama, writing, art, or music (item 55). The responses indicate that teachers provide more opportunities for personal written responses than for the other productive experiences (see Table 49 below).

TABLE 49

FREQUENCY OF EXTENDED READING ACTIVITIES
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Item	Reading Activity	Daily or Almost Daily	At Least Once a Week	At Least Once a Month	Once a Year or Less
54	Teacher asks students to write personal response.	12.8%	30.7%	33.1%	22.2%
55	Teacher provides opportunities to extend reading through projects and activities such as drama, writing, art, music.	10.4	20.4	32.6	35.4

Use of Reading Strategies

Students were questioned on the frequency with which they use particular reading strategies prior to, during and after reading. According to the percentage of respondents choosing the category "often" with respect to the individual strategies listed (item J[ii-viii]), students practice the specified reading strategies in the order of frequency reported in Table 50 below.

TABLE 50

STUDENTS' USE OF READING STRATEGIES
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Item J	Survey Questions on Student Use of Reading Strategies	Frequency of Use		
		Often	Sometimes	Never
(v)	Do you keep your mind on what you are reading?	63.0%	34.1%	2.2%
(iii)	Do you adjust your reading speed to suit the materials you are reading?	43.9	41.1	13.9
(vii)	Do you try to find main ideas in what you are reading?	39.8	50.0	9.3
(viii)	Do you practice recalling what you have read?	26.1	53.5	19.4
(vi)	Do you make use of graphs, tables, charts, and pictures while you read?	25.9	38.1	35.0
(ii)	Do you have a clear purpose for reading before you start?	25.7	63.1	10.0
(iv)	Do you preview a chapter or book before you read it?	19.1	40.4	39.3

Four-fifths or more of the students indicated that they "often" or "sometimes" practice the following reading strategies: establishing a clear purpose for reading before starting to read; adjusting their reading speed to suit the materials being read; trying to find main ideas in what they are reading; recalling what they have read; and keeping their minds on what they are reading. Only the latter strategy was reported to be in frequent use by the majority of students. Close to two-fifths of the students noted that they never preview a chapter/book before reading it, and over a third never make use of graphs, tables, charts, and pictures while reading.

Numerous survey items also addressed the frequency with which teacher-facilitated reading strategies are used within English Language Arts classes (see Table 51 below). A small majority of students reported that their English Language Arts teacher provides the following types of reading assistance from about half the time to almost every time:

- the teacher helps students organize information after reading (item 51);
- the teacher provides students with a list of questions to answer while reading (item 48);
- the teacher and students participate in activities which help students prepare for reading (item 47).

Approximately a third of the students also reported receiving the following forms of reading assistance in English Language Arts classes from about half the time to almost every time:

- the teacher states a purpose or asks students to state a purpose for reading before they begin to read (item 53);
- the teacher tells students or helps students decide which reading strategy to use for a particular reading task (item 50).

TABLE 51

TEACHER-FACILITATED USE OF READING STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSES

English Language Schools (Grade 8)

		Frequency of Use*		
Item	The Teacher:	Almost Every Time	About Half the Time or More	Less than Half the Time/Never
47	helps with activities to prepare for reading.	9.8%	44.7%	43.9%
48	provides questions to answer while reading.	30.2	28.1	40.7
50	helps establish strategy for particular reading task.	7.4	25.4	65.6
51	helps organize information after reading.	12.8	50.5	35.2
53	states/asks for purpose before reading.	10.6	25.0	63.3

* These three frequency categories encompass the various frequency options listed for the respective survey items.

CHAPTER 6

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS (GRADE 8)

INTRODUCTION

The Teacher Questionnaire accompanying the grade 8 Reading Assessment (1992) was sent to a total of 334 teachers teaching English Language Arts in English language schools, and was completed by 252 teachers. The return rate was 75.4%.

This component of the Reading Assessment was intended to give teachers an opportunity to provide information and express their views on the implementation, importance and/or adequacy of the following aspects of reading/English Language Arts:

- teacher training and professional development
- school organization
- the curriculum
- teaching materials
- teaching practices
- evaluation

In the final section of the survey, teachers were invited to make any additional comments regarding the teaching of reading at the grade 8 level, as well as on the strengths and weaknesses of the grade 8 Reading Assessment.

A detailed report of the Teacher Survey results follows. It is important to keep in mind that the statistics represent the responses of teachers coming from schools of varying sizes, which will affect factors such as class size, availability of resources and support services, and so on. Unless specified otherwise, the percentage figures take into account all 252 teachers completing the questionnaire. Where reported cumulative percentages do not add up to 100%, it is due to rounding-off or because the non-response rate is not reported. Non-respondents are excluded from the mean and median figures reported.

TEACHER TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teaching Experience (Items I[A, B])

As of June, 1992, the teachers who completed the Teacher Questionnaire had a median of fourteen years of teaching experience in total, and a median of eight years of experience teaching Middle Years (grades 5-8) English Language Arts. Just over three-fifths (61.1%) of the teachers reported having more than ten years of teaching experience in total (86.1% had five or more years), and approximately a third (33.7%) had more than ten years of experience teaching Middle Years English Language Arts (64.7% had five or more years). It appears that many teachers now teaching grade 8 English Language Arts have spent time teaching at other levels and/or other curricula.

Academic Training (Item I[C])

Teachers were asked to specify how many three-credit courses (half courses) they had taken in total, and in the last five years in the following areas: English (Arts Faculty); the teaching of English Language Arts (Education Faculty); and the teaching of reading (Education Faculty). The non-response rate for these survey questions was exceptionally high: approximately a quarter to a third of the teachers did not provide information on the number of courses taken in total, and over half did not provide information on the number of courses taken during the past five years.

The survey data on the total number of three-credit courses taken indicate the following: 15.9% of the teachers had taken no courses in English, 52.8% had taken one to ten courses, and 7.5% had taken more than ten (23.8% did not respond); 15.5% had taken no courses in the teaching of English Language Arts, 45.6% had taken one to four courses, and 12.7% had taken five or more (26.2% did not respond); and 21.4% had taken no courses in the teaching of reading, 38.9% had taken one to four courses, and 5.6% had taken five or more (34.1% did not respond).

In total, then, survey respondents reported having taken a median of 3.0 three-credit courses in English, 2.0 three-credit courses in the teaching of English Language Arts, and 1.0 three-credit course in the teaching of reading. The median number of courses taken by survey respondents in the past five years in any of the three areas was 0.0, although approximately a tenth of the teachers reported having taken one or more three-credit courses in each of the three areas during that time.

Knowledge of Reading Instruction (Item I[D])

Teachers were asked to rate their own understanding of various areas of reading instruction currently emphasized in the curriculum, although they were not asked to specify how they obtained their knowledge (that is, whether through academic course work, professional development sessions, or their own reading). As indicated in Table 52 below, over half the teachers professed to have a comprehensive understanding of content area reading, reading/writing portfolios, whole language, and bulk reading; close to half professed to have a thorough understanding of reader response and teaching of reading strategies; and approximately a third or fewer claimed to have a thorough knowledge of developmental reading and reading cuing systems. Significantly, from approximately a third to half of the teachers considered themselves to have only a partial understanding of every major area of reading instruction listed. In addition, more than a tenth claimed not to understand four of the areas.

TABLE 52

TEACHERS' SELF-RATED KNOWLEDGE OF READING INSTRUCTION
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Area of Reading Instruction	Understand Well	Understand Partly	Do Not Understand	NR
• Content area reading	64.3%	33.7%	0.8%	1.2%
• Reading/writing portfolios	63.5	31.7	3.6	1.2
• Whole language	56.3	40.9	2.4	0.4
• Bulk reading	53.2	32.5	11.9	2.4
• Reader response	46.8	40.9	11.5	0.8
• Teaching of reading strategies	44.8	46.4	7.1	1.6
• Developmental reading	33.7	50.0	14.3	2.0
• Reading cuing systems	19.4	47.6	28.6	4.4

Professional Development in Reading/English Language Arts (Items I [E, F, G, H])

While few teachers reported having taken post-secondary courses in the teaching of reading/ English Language Arts in the last five years, nearly all claimed to have had opportunities to participate in professional development in these areas during that time. Of the teachers with five or more years of experience teaching Middle Years English Language Arts, 68.1% reported having had ten or more hours of professional development in reading/English Language Arts available to them during the past five years, 20.2% had five to nine hours, 8.6% had one to four hours, and 3.1% had no opportunities. By comparison, 52.1% reported having taken ten or more hours of professional development in these areas during the same period, 19.0% had taken five to nine hours, 8.0% had taken one to four hours, and the remainder either had not taken any (5.5%) or did not respond (15.3%).The median number of hours of professional development taken by survey respondents in these areas during the past five years was 10.0 hours.

When requested to assess the usefulness of the professional development sessions in reading/ English Language Arts in which they participated during the past five years, half the teachers (50.0%) rated the sessions as "extremely useful" or "very useful" and approximately two-fifths (39.3%) rated them as "somewhat useful." A few (1.2%) teachers judged the sessions to be useless.

Teachers were also given an opportunity to rate their need for professional development on seven different topics. These topics are listed in Table 53 below according to the percentage of teachers registering "great" or "some" need for professional development in the respective areas.

TABLE 53

TEACHER RATING OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOPICS
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Professional Development Topics	Great + Some Need	Great Need	Some Need	No Need	NR
• Evaluation techniques for reading	86.9%	35.7%	51.2%	9.5%	3.6%
• Strategies for specific types of text and reading processes including content area reading strategies	86.5	34.1	52.4	11.1	2.4
• Teaching approaches (e.g., grouping, paired learning)	80.6	28.2	52.4	16.3	3.2
• Available reading materials	78.9	21.4	57.5	16.7	4.4
• Basic reading theory	76.6	16.3	60.3	20.6	2.8
• Use of the curriculum documents for grade 8 English Language Arts	68.7	16.7	52.0	26.6	4.8
• General philosophy of the English Language Arts curriculum	58.7	8.7	50.0	37.7	3.6

Over three-quarters of the teachers noted a need for professional development on the following topics: evaluation techniques for reading; strategies for specific types of text and reading processes including content area reading strategies; teaching approaches; available reading materials; and basic reading theory. Although over a quarter of the teachers registered "no need" for professional development sessions on the general philosophy of the English Language Arts curriculum or on the use of the grade 8 English Language Arts curriculum documents, the majority felt some or great need for additional training on both topics. The high rate of response to this survey question may be a further indication of the urgency of teachers' needs.

Over a tenth (13.1%) of the teachers took the opportunity to specify additional professional development topics. Twenty respondents offered suggestions, identifying a diverse range of needs. More than one respondent expressed a need for professional development in the following areas: student interest and motivation; modifications resulting from mainstreaming; reading/writing for English as a Second Language students; and evaluation/assessment techniques.

Professional Literature/Resources (Item I[I])

Teachers were also asked to report on the availability and use of professional literature and its influence on their current teaching practice. There appears to be some correlation between the frequency with which professional materials are made available in schools and the frequency with which teachers read professional literature on reading/language arts. According to teacher responses, a small majority (59.6%) of the schools make professional reading materials available to teachers weekly or monthly, a quarter (24.2%) do so quarterly, and a tenth (10.7%) never do so. Just over half the teachers (51.6%) reported reading articles from professional journals/books about reading/language arts weekly or monthly, over a third (36.5%) reported doing so every four months, and nearly a tenth (8.3%) never do so.

A substantial majority of teachers indicated that the contributions/support of colleagues and administrators with respect to promoting professional literature about reading/language arts is sporadic or absent altogether: nearly three-fifths noted that colleagues or administrators refer to such materials every four months (34.1%) or never (24.2%); and approximately three-fifths noted that administrators encourage such reading either quarterly (27.4%) or never (31.7%). Under a third of the teachers claimed to receive these two forms of professional support weekly or monthly. (Just over a tenth did not respond to either question.)

Although 14.3% of the teachers chose not to comment on the extent to which research in reading/language arts influences their classroom teaching, more than four-fifths noted varying degrees of influence: approximately two-fifths (38.5%) noted weekly or monthly influence, and nearly the same proportion (38.9%) noted quarterly influence. Close to a tenth (8.3%) indicated that research in this area does not influence their teaching.

Change in Teaching Practice (Item I[J, K])

Nearly all teachers (88.1%) observed changes in their teaching practice in reading/language arts over the past five years. In identifying factors contributing to these changes, the majority of teachers credited professional development sessions/activities (69.0%) and their own professional reading/study (56.3%). Teachers also attributed changes in their teaching practice to: colleagues' suggestions (selected by 42.9%), change in divisional/school policy/philosophy (selected by 32.9%), and curriculum guides (selected by 31.0%).

Close to a tenth (9.1%) of the teachers specified other factors influencing changes in their teaching practices and/or elaborated on the factors identified in the questionnaire. Most of the thirty-six comments focused on the influence of teaching-related experiences/observations and/or the pursuit of professional growth/development/improvement through personal effort, reading, and attending meetings/conferences. Three respondents also commented on the influence of other individuals.

Teacher Qualification Rating (Item I[L])

At the conclusion of the "Teacher Training and Professional Development" section of the survey, teachers were asked to rate their own qualifications to teach grade 8 English Language Arts, taking into account their university education, professional development and experience. While 6.0% felt they were "inadequately qualified," nearly three-fifths (57.9%) rated themselves as "qualified" and slightly over a third (34.1%) rated themselves as "very qualified" (2.0% did not respond).

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

The second section of the Teacher Questionnaire focused on the organization of the English Language Arts program in schools, the influence teachers have in making decisions regarding language arts programming, and the availability of support services for English Language Arts teachers.

Organization of English Language Arts Program (Items II[A, B, C, D, E, F])

Of the teachers participating in the survey, slightly over half (52.8%) indicated they were teaching grade 8 English Language Arts by "choice" and just under a tenth (9.1%) were doing so by "negotiated choice." Over a third (35.7%) noted they were teaching this course by "assignment."

As shown in Table 54 below, during the 1991-92 school year survey respondents were teaching a median of 2 English Language Arts classes (27.4% were teaching one class, 28.2% were teaching two classes, and 39.7% were teaching three or more classes), and had a median of 32 English Language Arts students (12.3% had from one to fourteen students, 35.3% had from fifteen to thirty, 29.8% had from thirty-one to sixty, and 21.0% had more than sixty). In 1991-92, the "median" grade 8 English Language Arts teacher taught in a school operating on a 6-day cycle, within which a total of 180 minutes (or 30 minutes per day) were available as preparation time, and 400 minutes (or 68 minutes per day) were allotted to each English Language Arts class being taught. The recommended time allotment for grade 8 English Language Arts in English language schools is 375 minutes per 5-day cycle (or 75 minutes per day). Thus, the median time allotment reported for a specific class falls slightly short of the recommended time allotment.

TABLE 54

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION PROFILE (1991–1992)
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Survey Questions	Teacher Responses	
	Mean	Median
• How many days are in your school cycle?	5.8	6.0
• How many minutes are allotted to each grade 8 English Language Arts class you teach?		
per cycle:	381.0	400.0
per day:	65.3	68.0
• How many minutes preparation time do you have?		
per cycle:	170.0	180.0
per day:	28.4	30.0
• How many English Language Arts classes do you teach this year?	2.9	2.0
• To how many students do you teach English Language Arts this year?	42.9	32.0

Teacher Influence in Decision Making (Item II[G])

Teachers were requested to rate the degree of influence they have over various decisions concerning the organization and teaching of grade 8 English Language Arts in their respective schools. Based on the teacher responses reported in Table 55 below, the majority of teachers perceive themselves as having "little/no influence" regarding the overall time allotment of the English Language Arts program; however, over four-fifths consider themselves to have extensive influence over the division of time for the various dimensions of the English Language Arts program.

TABLE 55

TEACHER INFLUENCE OVER DECISIONS CONCERNING THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Area of Influence	Great Influence	Some Influence	Little/No Influence	NR
• Choice of learning strategies to teach	85.7%	11.9%	1.2%	1.2%
• Choice of teaching methods/strategies	84.5	13.9	0.8	0.8
• The division of time within the ELA's time allotment (reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, language study, literature)	82.1	10.7	6.0	1.2
• Choice of evaluation methods/instruments	72.6	24.6	2.0	0.8
• Choice of teaching materials/reading program	70.2	26.6	2.0	1.2
• Materials added to the school library	30.2	56.0	12.7	1.2
• The amount and kind of professional development	23.8	58.3	16.3	1.6
• The overall time allotment	20.6	20.2	57.5	1.6

As suggested by the data reported in Table 55, teachers see themselves as having the greatest degree of influence over decisions directly related to their individual approach to teaching/learning. For example, over four-fifths of the teachers felt they had "great influence" over choice of teaching methods/strategies and choice of learning strategies to teach. Their influence with respect to determining teaching content appears to be somewhat reduced: less than three-quarters of the teachers reported having "great influence" over choice of teaching materials/reading program and choice of evaluation methods/instruments, both of which influence curriculum implementation.

The survey responses further suggest that teachers feel they have little decision-making power in relation to teaching resources. Less than a third of the teachers perceived themselves as having "great influence" over the selection of school library materials and over the amount and kind of professional development available to them. Both of these types of teaching supports are essential for effective teaching.

Only 2.4% of the teachers specified other areas of influence, such as extension activities, extracurricular activities, and subscription journals.

Availability of Support Services (Item II[H])

Survey participants were given an opportunity to comment on the extent to which specific types of support services are available in their schools, choosing one of three response options: ''very available,'' ''available'' and ''not available.'' When reviewing the teacher ratings reported in Table 56 below, it is important to keep in mind that the availability of resources is dependent upon the size, clientele needs and policy decisions of schools/divisions represented in the survey.

TABLE 56

TEACHER RATING OF AVAILABILITY OF SUPPORT SERVICES IN SCHOOLS
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Type of Support Service	Very Available	Available	Not Available	NR
• Resource teacher(s)	26.6%	55.2%	17.5%	0.8%
• Library technician(s)	21.0	34.1	41.3	3.6
• Teacher aide(s)	19.4	61.1	19.0	0.4
• Qualified teacher librarian(s)	14.3	19.4	64.3	2.0
• Department head or team leader(s)	13.1	19.0	65.1	2.8
• Special education teacher(s)	9.1	36.5	51.6	2.8
• Divisional consultant(s)	7.9	46.0	43.3	2.8
• Speech pathologist(s)	6.0	75.4	15.1	3.6

According to the teacher ratings reported in Table 56, each of the eight support services listed is ''not available'' to a significant proportion of teachers: between half and two-thirds have no access to department head or team leaders, qualified teacher librarians, and special education teachers; just over two-fifths have no access to library technicians and divisional consultants; and close to a fifth have no access to teacher aides, resource teachers, and speech pathologists. Of all the support services listed, only the following three were reported to be readily available to approximately a fifth or more of the teachers: teacher aides, library technicians and resource teachers.

A few teachers (3.6%) made additional comments regarding the availability of support services. Five individuals remarked on the availability of specific supports such as volunteers, administration, a psychologist, and the Reading Resource Centre (Winnipeg).

THE CURRICULUM

The third section of the Teacher Questionnaire requested information on the availability of the English Language Arts curriculum documents (item III[A]), the extent to which teachers understand and use these documents (items III[B, C]), and the adequacy of the Middle Years English Language Arts curriculum guide (item III[D]).

As indicated in Table 57 below, nearly all teachers claimed to have a copy of both the *English Language Arts: Middle Years* (1982) curriculum guide and the *English Language Arts: Overview K—12* (1988), whereas only a little over half the teachers claimed to have a copy of the *Middle Years Source Book* (1984) (11.5% did not provide information on the latter, 2.8 indicated this document was not applicable). The survey data reveals that the Middle Years curriculum guide is used on a weekly/monthly basis by a third of the teachers, while the *Overview* and the *Source Book* are used on a weekly/monthly basis by under a fifth of the teachers. The vast majority of teachers professed to make infrequent or no use of the three curriculum publications.

TABLE 57

AVAILABILITY AND TEACHER USE OF CURRICULUM DOCUMENTS
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Curriculum Document	Teacher Has Copy			Teacher Uses Document				
	Yes	No	NR N/A	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Never	NR
• *English Language Arts: Overview K—12* (1988)	91.7%	4.8%	3.6%	4.4%	14.7%	53.2%	17.1%	10.7%
• *English Language Arts: Middle Years* (1982)	95.6	3.6	0.8	7.5	25.8	52.4	9.5	4.8
• *Middle Years Source Book* (1984)	54.8	31.0	14.3	3.6	12.7	34.5	32.1	17.1

Fifty-five teachers provided explanations of why they rarely or never use one or more of the documents, with eight respondents making two comments (for a total of sixty-three comments). While the comments focused on a wide range of issues, several comments were made repeatedly: nineteen teachers indicated that they do not have copies of the relevant document(s); seven claimed not to be aware of the existence of the *Middle Years Source Book*; eight made a distinction between using the documents regularly and reviewing/familiarizing themselves with the curriculum, reviewing it as needed and/or incorporating its goals/theories in planning or teaching a course; and six criticized specific aspects of the curriculum, describing it as confusing, awkward, cumbersome, lengthy, and lacking in clarity, concision, and usefulness, etc.

One of the items in this section of the survey gave teachers an opportunity to rate the need for revision of the content of the *English Language Arts: Middle Years* (1982) curriculum guide (item III[D]). On average, nearly three-fifths of the teachers noted satisfaction with the various components of the guide, nearly a quarter registered dissatisfaction, and close to a fifth declined to give a rating (see Table 58 below).

TABLE 58

TEACHER RATING OF NEED FOR REVISION OF
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: MIDDLE YEARS
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Content Area	Satisfactory/Does Not Need Revision	Unsatisfactory/ Needs Revision	NR
Introduction			
• Goals and Objectives from the *Overview K—12*	62.3%	20.6%	17.1%
Oracy			
• Listening	63.9	16.7	19.4
• Oral Language	62.7	17.9	19.4
• Drama	56.0	24.2	19.8
Literacy			
• Visual Communication	59.5	21.0	19.4
• Handwriting	54.0	25.8	20.2
• Reading and Literature	59.5	23.0	17.5
• Composing and Writing	56.7	25.4	17.9
• Spelling	47.2	35.3	17.5
• Language Structure and Usage	54.0	28.2	17.9
• Dictionary Studies	59.1	21.0	19.8

Although few teachers reported making frequent use of the curriculum documents, over nine-tenths (91.3%) rated their knowledge of the grade 8 English Language Arts curriculum documents as "adequate" or "very adequate" (8.7% judged their knowledge to be "inadequate"). Moreover, virtually all teachers considered themselves to have an adequate or highly adequate understanding of what grade 8 students should be doing in English Language Arts (97.7%) and of the teaching strategies appropriate for grade 8 English Language Arts (94.9%). The response rate for this item was 100%.

TEACHING MATERIALS

The "Teaching Materials" section of the Teacher Questionnaire inquired about the type, range, quality and availability of materials used in teaching grade 8 English Language Arts. In the first item, teachers were presented with a list of ten different types of teaching materials and asked to estimate the frequency with which they used the materials in their reading/English Language Arts program in the 1991-92 school year (item IV[A]). The respective materials are listed in Table 59 below according to the reported frequency of "weekly" and "monthly" use combined.

TABLE 59

TEACHING MATERIALS USED IN READING/ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM (1991—92)

English Language Schools (Grade 8)

	Frequency of Use					
Materials Used	Weekly + Monthly	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Never	NR
• Content area material	77.4%	47.2%	30.2%	14.7%	2.8%	5.2%
• Reference materials	70.2	35.3	34.9	23.8	2.8	3.2
• Videotapes/films, audiotapes	60.7	12.3	48.4	31.7	5.6	2.0
• Newspapers, magazines	58.3	22.2	36.1	36.9	2.0	2.8
• Computers	56.4	42.5	13.9	16.3	24.2	3.2
• Integrated language series	51.1	31.7	19.4	22.2	17.5	9.1
• Student-authored materials (e.g., anthologies)	49.6	23.8	25.8	35.7	11.1	3.6
• Environmental print (e.g., ads, brochures)	39.7	9.1	30.6	43.3	14.3	2.8
• Basal readers	38.1	22.2	15.9	15.1	40.1	6.7
• Trade literature	25.0	8.7	16.3	25.8	37.7	11.5

According to the survey results, teachers use a variety of different materials in their English Language Arts program, although the frequency of use varies considerably. It appears that teachers have a strong preference for the use of content area material and reference materials, with over two-thirds of the teachers indicating they use these materials weekly/monthly. From approximately half to three-fifths of the teachers also estimated that they make weekly/monthly use of the following: student-authored materials; integrated language series; computers; newspapers and magazines; and videotapes/films and audiotapes. While a small majority of teachers appear to make frequent use of computers and integrated language series, over a quarter either indicated they never use these materials or did not provide an estimation as to frequency of use. Approximately two-fifths of the teachers reported that they never use basal readers or trade literature (the non-response rate for these materials was 6.7% and 11.5% respectively).

Teachers were also invited to rate various factors influencing the choice and quality of English Language Arts materials used in the 1991-92 school year (item IV[B]). The ratings presented in Table 60 below indicate that three-quarters of the teachers feel they have good or excellent access to a variety of materials and that the quality and relevance of these materials is good or excellent; however, less than two-thirds gave the same rating to the range of reading levels in the available materials. The ratings regarding Canadian content of available materials were almost evenly divided between excellent/good and fair/poor. Access to information about new materials and to commercial teacher guides appears to be less than ideal for the majority of teachers.

TABLE 60

TEACHER RATING OF ACCESS TO AND CONTENT OF TEACHING MATERIALS

English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Teaching Materials	Excellent + Good	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	NR
• Access to a variety of materials	74.3%	18.7%	55.6%	21.0%	3.2%	1.6%
• Quality and relevance of materials available	74.2	13.5	60.7	21.4	2.4	2.0
• Range of reading levels in available material	63.1	15.1	48.0	32.5	2.8	1.6
• Canadian content of available materials	50.0	9.1	40.9	38.1	7.9	4.0
• Access to information about new materials	47.2	8.3	38.9	39.3	11.1	2.4
• Access to commercial teacher guides	46.0	6.3	39.7	34.5	15.1	4.4

Over three-quarters (77.4%) of the survey participants noted that they are able to purchase materials not on the Manitoba authorized textbook list (item IV[C]); however, only a quarter (24.6%) of the teachers indicated that their school has a review process for evaluating these materials (item IV[D]).

TEACHING PRACTICES

The purpose of this section of the Teacher Questionnaire was to obtain information on the range and balance of teaching strategies practiced by English Language Arts teachers, and the importance educators ascribe to various reading activities, strategies and skills.

Teaching Strategies Used (Item V[A])

Survey participants were asked to specify the frequency with which they use various teacher-centered and student-centered activities in their teaching of reading/English Language Arts. The activities are listed in Table 61 below according to the reported frequency of ''daily'' and ''weekly'' use combined.

TABLE 61

TEACHING STRATEGIES USED IN READING/ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

	Frequency of Use					
Strategies Used	**Daily + Weekly**	**Daily**	**Weekly**	**Monthly**	**Never**	**NR**
Teacher-Centered Activities						
• Mini-lesson to whole class	92.0%	45.6%	46.4%	4.8%	0.0%	3.2%
• Large-group discussion	84.9	39.7	45.2	9.9	0.8	4.4
• Reading aloud to class	81.4	30.2	51.2	15.5	1.2	2.0
• Lecture to whole class (little discussion)	59.6	16.3	43.3	25.8	10.7	4.0
Student-Centered Activities						
• Small-group work for discussion/sharing/assignments	80.9	31.3	49.6	16.3	0.8	2.0
• Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR)	79.0	40.1	38.9	11.5	7.5	2.0
• Peer tutoring	61.1	23.8	37.3	25.0	9.9	4.0
• Reader response logs/journals	55.6	14.3	41.3	23.4	17.9	3.2
• Bulk reading	50.0	19.0	31.0	24.2	16.7	9.1
• Reading conferences	32.5	6.7	25.8	34.1	27.4	6.0
• Cross-age reading	28.9	6.7	22.2	19.8	45.2	6.0
• Readers theatre	6.0	0.8	5.2	40.1	46.8	7.1

The survey data suggest that teacher-centered strategies are commonly practiced in most grade 8 English Language Arts classrooms: more than four-fifths of the teachers present mini-lessons to the whole class, lead large-group discussion, and read aloud to the class daily/weekly, and three-fifths deliver whole-class lectures daily/weekly.

Two of the eight student-centered activities listed were likewise identified by approximately four-fifths of the teachers as being in daily/weekly use: small-group work (for discussion, sharing, and assignment completion) and Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR). A small majority also reported making daily/weekly use of peer tutoring, reader response logs or journals, and bulk reading (although close to a fifth never make use of the latter two activities). Significantly, over a quarter of the teachers indicated that they never use reading conferences and almost half never include readers theatre or cross-age reading in the reading/English Language Arts program.

Importance of Teaching Practices (Item V[B])

The second item in this section of the survey asked teachers to rate the importance of various instructional objectives/goals, reading activities/strategies, and process skills currently emphasized in the reading/English Language Arts curriculum. A review of the teacher responses reported in Table 62 below gives a clear indication that each aspect of the reading program listed in the survey holds a place of importance for virtually every teacher, only the degree of importance varies.

More than three-fifths of the teachers assigned a rating of "very important" to eight of the eleven reading program components listed: variety of reading material; opportunities for personal response; oral discussion of materials read; pre-reading activities and setting purpose for reading; student understanding and use of specific strategies for reading different types of materials; differentiated learning experiences; flexibility of reading rate (silent reading); and collaborative learning experiences. From two-fifths to half the teachers also ascribed great importance to: oral reading fluency; student knowledge of literary concepts; and student understanding and use of the three major cuing systems in reading. These ratings suggest that teachers perceive themselves as valuing a variety of teaching practices in the reading/English Language Arts program.

TABLE 62

TEACHER RATING OF IMPORTANCE OF READING PROGRAM COMPONENTS
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Dimension of Reading Program	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	NR
• Variety of reading material	90.5%	8.7%	0.0%	0.8%
• Opportunities for personal response	84.9	14.3	0.0	0.8
• Oral discussion of materials read	75.8	23.4	0.0	0.8
• Pre-reading activities and setting purpose for reading	71.8	26.2	0.8	1.2
• Student understanding and use of specific strategies for reading different types of materials	65.9	30.2	0.8	3.2
• Differentiated learning experiences	64.3	32.5	0.0	3.2
• Flexibility of reading rate (silent reading)	61.9	34.5	0.4	3.2
• Collaborative learning experiences	60.3	36.9	0.4	2.4
• Oral reading fluency	50.0	46.4	2.4	1.2
• Student knowledge of literary concepts	42.1	55.6	1.2	1.2
• Student understanding of the three major cuing systems in reading	41.7	47.2	2.0	9.1

EVALUATION

In the "Evaluation" section of the survey, teachers had an opportunity to rate the importance of a range of products and processes used in evaluating students in reading (item VI[A]). According to the teacher ratings reported in Table 63 below, the majority of teachers value a wide range of products and processes in assessing reading.

TABLE 63

TEACHER RATING OF IMPORTANCE OF EVALUATION PRODUCTS AND PROCESSES
English Language Schools (Grade 8)

Type of Evaluation	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	NR
Evaluations Focusing on Product:				
• Daily work assignments	85.7%	13.5%	0.0%	0.8%
• Projects/presentations	69.8	28.6	0.8	0.8
• Reading/writing portfolios	61.5	34.9	1.2	2.4
• Reading response journals or logs	41.3	50.0	7.5	1.2
• Written tests or examinations	32.9	59.1	6.7	1.2
• Bulk reading lists and experiences	32.9	52.8	7.9	6.3
• Informal reading inventories	19.0	64.7	11.5	4.8
• Oral tests	17.1	69.8	10.7	2.4
• Cloze tests	9.9	62.3	22.2	5.6
• Standardized tests	4.4	52.0	40.9	2.8
Evaluations Focusing on Process:				
• Attitudes to reading	73.4	24.2	0.8	1.6
• Group participation	66.3	32.1	0.4	1.2
• Self-evaluation	62.3	34.9	1.2	1.6
• Individual conferencing	57.5	38.9	2.0	1.6
• Observation	53.6	42.1	1.6	2.8
• Strategy evaluation	29.8	59.9	3.2	7.1
• Peer evaluation	25.4	64.7	8.3	1.6

All but two of the products and processes listed were identified by nearly all teachers as "somewhat important" or "very important" means of evaluating students in the reading dimension of the English Language Arts curriculum. The two exceptions were cloze tests and standardized tests, dismissed as unimportant by approximately one-fifth and two-fifths of the teachers respectively.

The majority of teachers gave a "very important" rating to three of the ten evaluations focusing on product: daily work assignments; projects/presentations; and reading/writing portfolios. Approximately one- to two-fifths of the survey respondents also emphasized the importance of the remaining five products listed: reading response journals/logs; written tests or examinations; bulk reading lists and experiences; informal reading inventories; and oral tests.

Between a half and three-quarters of the teachers also assigned a "very important" rating to five of the seven forms of evaluation focusing on process: attitudes to reading; group participation; self-evaluation; individual conferencing; and observation. Less than a third considered peer evaluation and strategy evaluation to be of great importance.

Twenty-six teachers responded to the invitation to comment on any other types of evaluation employed during the past year, with five teachers making more than one comment (item VI[B]). For the most part, teachers provided explanations or elaborations of the various types of evaluations listed in the questionnaire, particularly emphasizing evaluations focusing on oral activities and written work, and student self-evaluation. A few teachers specified other types of evaluations such as diagnostic testing, listening skill tests, assessment of reading strategies, and so on.

The last question relating to student evaluation inquired about the percentage of time teachers spend in formative evaluation and summative evaluation respectively (item VI[C]). Based on their responses, grade 8 English Language Arts teachers spend a median of 60% of their evaluation time in formative evaluation, and a median of 40% in summative evaluation.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Survey participants were given an opportunity to make additional comments regarding the teaching of reading at the grade 8 level (item VII[A]). Just over two-fifths (21.4%) of the teachers responded, offering a total of sixty-nine comments: eighteen teachers commented on various aspects of the curriculum; twenty made observations and suggestions regarding teaching/learning strategies; eighteen identified needs related to reading materials (including the content, variety, range, and availability of materials); four reflected on student motivation; and seven identified professional development needs.

Teachers were also invited to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the grade 8 Reading Assessment (item VII[B]). Approximately a quarter (24.2%) of the survey participants responded with a total of ninety-two comments: one respondent claimed to lack knowledge about the assessment; six made observations about the sampling of students; six questioned the timing of the assessment; twenty-seven stated opinions regarding the test construction/design; eighteen criticized various aspects of the test instruments/administration; twenty-two made observations and suggestions regarding the test content; six remarked on the questionnaire; and three expressed concerns about the use of test results. The teachers' comments will be useful in the development of future assessments.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (GRADE 8)

The Technical Advisory Committee reviewed the results of each component of the grade 8 Reading Assessment. The following discussion represents the committee's findings and conclusions drawn from the student reading test and reading survey results as well as the teacher survey results. A set of recommendations based on the committee's findings appears at the conclusion of the discussion.

STUDENT TEST RESULTS

Response Rate

With a few exceptions, the rate of response to both the multiple-choice and open-ended items on the grade 8 Reading Assessment was remarkably high. The high level of participation suggests that students were engaged in the assessment reading materials and tasks, and that they reacted positively to the assessment.

Meaning Vocabulary Subtest

In responding to the Meaning Vocabulary items, the vast majority of students demonstrated their ability to understand words whose meaning, whether literal or metaphoric, was explicitly stated in the text. A substantial proportion, however, had difficulty understanding vocabulary whose meaning could be inferred from implicit contextual clues. These results suggest that, when dealing with vocabulary, teachers need to continue emphasizing the use of contextual clues to derive implicit meaning from text.

Literal Comprehension Subtest

Students gave a strong performance on the Literal Comprehension subtest, especially on the multiple-choice items requiring a literal reading of the short story and the table. A substantial majority also responded successfully to the multiple-choice items requiring an understanding of explicitly stated meaning in the expository reading selections; however, only about a tenth of the students provided fully or partially satisfactory responses to the one exposition-related item requiring an open-ended response (item E).

The weak performance on the open-ended response item may suggest that students had difficulty understanding the wording or structure of the question itself, a factor which could also partially account for the comparatively low scores for one of the multiple-choice items relating to the exposition (item 24). This possible explanation raises concern about whether students are being taught how to work with a sufficiently wide range of question types.

Responses to the open-ended item further suggest that students do not have sufficient skills and/or experiences in adapting their reading strategies to suit a particular type of text. This finding has numerous instructional implications. To enable students to construct meaning from text, they need to be taught to adjust their reading strategies to suit different types of text, especially exposition. Students need to be taught how expository material is constructed and how expository arguments are made (for example, by exploring authorial intent, method and voice). The strategies or methods specified in the given article (for example, observation and research) are the very strategies students should be taught to look for in other expository texts, in addition to using them in their own expository writing. Finally, students need to be taught the importance of testing the validity of the methods used by writers to draw conclusions.

Interpretive Comprehension Subtest

Responses to several items on the Interpretive Comprehension subtest reveal that a high percentage of students lack the cognitive strategies required to differentiate implicitly stated textual information from explicitly stated information, or to sort relevant from irrelevant data. For two items (items 14, 36) a large proportion of students chose responses demonstrating a literal reading of a text where an inferential or interpretive reading was required. These results raise concerns about whether students are taught to work with a sufficiently wide range of question types and/or are taught to ask questions that will help them distinguish what type of task (for example, literal or inferential) is required.

The high percentage of wrong responses to both the poetry-related items on this subtest (items 36, I[i&ii]) shows that many students had great difficulty interpreting the poetry selection on the assessment. This suggests that students may not have the experience, or may not be developmentally ready, to process or interpret complex poetry independently. At this level, students may require interactive experiences (such as discussion) to develop their interpretive comprehension skills related to poetry. A further implication of this finding is that the interpretation of poetry should not be an independent activity in an assessment without proper supports such as appropriate background knowledge and the ability to adapt reading style to a particular text.

Student performance on the items dealing with text presented in tabular form was considerably lower on the Interpretive Comprehension subtest than on the Literal Comprehension subtest.

Whereas nearly all students demonstrated the ability to read and understand statistical information on a literal level (items 56, 57, 58), a comparatively low percentage of the students were successful in manipulating and interpreting statistical data (items 59, 60). This finding raises the question of whether classroom teaching related to tables and charts is limited to a literal level.

Since members of society are increasingly required to make meaning of data presented in table and chart form in daily life (for example, in the media), it is crucial that the ability to make meaning of data be viewed and taught as a necessary life skill. Students need to be provided with strategies for making meaning of statistical information and be given appropriate opportunities to practice reading, manipulating, interpreting and drawing conclusions from data. This may involve interactive situations (such as debating) in which students are required to draw on and explore the implications of statistical data.

Critical-Reflective Comprehension Subtest

Although the mean performance was lower on the Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtest than on any of the other subtests, there is some cause for optimism in the observation that approximately two-thirds of the open-ended responses were scored as complete or partial responses. The largest proportion of responses, however, reflected only a partial understanding of the various reading materials and/or tasks, which indicates that students need further encouragement and experience in giving appropriate full support and/or evidence for their observations and comments.

There is also evidence in the subtest results that students need to continue developing their understanding of the relationship (relevance) between reading and the real-world context. This need is reflected in the comparatively high non-response rate for a number of items relying heavily on students' ability to link the reading material with their own knowledge/experience of the real world and vice versa. Many students require guidance in understanding this strategy and using it more effectively.

Reading Strategies and Process Skills Subtest

In general, students performed almost equally well on the items assessing their own use of reading strategies as on those assessing their skill in reviewing the strategies or techniques employed within the selected reading materials. A review of the results for the individual items on this subtest strongly suggests, however, that students experience much greater difficulty processing exposition than they do processing narration (a difference which is much more apparent in the results for this subtest than for any of the other subtests). A substantial majority of students were unsuccessful in selecting an effective reading strategy for the expository reading selections and in identifying an effective question to monitor their comprehension of a particular expository text. These findings may be an indication that students are given inadequate exposure to expository text patterns and the use of strategies needed to process this type of reading material.

STUDENT READING SURVEY

Students' Self-Concept as Readers and Interest in Reading

There are some highly encouraging findings in the grade 8 Student Reading Survey results. Survey responses indicate that a high percentage of grade 8 students have positive self-esteem as readers, experience little difficulty in any area of reading, and spend time reading for enjoyment. The data showing that three-quarters of the students spend their own money on reading material reflect a high level of interest in reading, and may also indicate the availability of book sales in schools (for example, book clubs or fairs may encourage such purchases). Also noteworthy is the finding that two-thirds of the students trade or share reading material with friends, which suggests the informal sharing of reading interests among peers even though few students reported the frequent sharing of reading either at home or at school.

Types of Reading Material

According to the students' estimations of the frequency with which they read various materials in school, the curriculum objective of balancing a wide range of reading materials is being achieved in the majority of classrooms. Unfortunately, however, the majority of students have infrequent or minimal opportunities to choose the reading materials explored in the English Language Arts program. This lack of choice is contrary to the curriculum emphasis on the importance of encouraging students to choose reading materials, which enables them to take ownership of their reading/learning by promoting decision making and increasing motivation, attentiveness and enjoyment.

Despite having inadequate choice in reading material in the classroom, students show signs of taking ownership of their reading outside of school. Most students reported that they often or sometimes read material related to a television show or a movie, parts of the newspaper besides the comics or sports, and news in a magazine or newspaper. This indicates that students are using reading material (language) to gather information in their daily lives. Furthermore, nearly all students indicated they often or sometimes read more than one book by the same author. By identifying and/or searching out their favourite authors, students are developing and exercising personal reading preferences to enhance their enjoyment of reading.

When asked to identify their out-of-school reading preferences, the majority of students selected eight of the twelve text types listed. Approximately nine-tenths selected magazines, and over two-thirds selected comics, fiction, newspapers, and advertisements/signs/menus. However, less than a third of the students reported reading poetry and non-fiction and under two-fifths reported reading maps, charts and graphs outside of school, which may be indicative of an inadequate ability to interpret such materials independently.

Although the survey results show that students read a variety of different texts outside of school, they appear to have the strongest preference for magazines. One may question whether the material most commonly read by students will influence the development of essential reading skills. For instance, the structure or format of magazines may hinder the development of reading fluency. Furthermore, given the vast choice of magazines available to young people and their influence in shaping values (for example, with respect to self-image, gender roles/stereotyping), there is also a concern about whether students have the necessary skills to choose materials selectively and to read them critically. These findings have serious instructional implications. Teachers need to continue to ensure that the range of reading materials explored in the curriculum is balanced and encourage students to read texts that contribute to the development of essential reading skills such as fluency in reading. In addition, teachers need to provide instruction in critical reading and examination of various types of reading materials, particularly those materials students tend to read on their own.

Types of Reading Activities

The survey data regarding the types of reading activities practiced in the English Language Arts program are cause for major concern. According to the survey responses, students perceive teachers to have a distinct preference for individual reading activities over interactive reading activities. The majority of students feel they have frequent opportunities to participate in individual reading activities such as reading to answer written questions and reading silently. Comparatively few students feel they have frequent occasions to participate in interactive and/or extended reading experiences such as: reading aloud; reading to prepare for oral discussion or oral reports; reading to respond in a journal or log; extending reading through projects and activities such as drama, writing, art and music; or engaging in shared reading (working in pairs, small groups, literature circles).

Considering that students perceive themselves to have limited opportunities for interactive experiences in the classroom, it may not be surprising that such a high percentage of students rarely or never share their reading with others either at home or at school. Educators need to continue to promote the sharing of reading experiences in and out of school.

Use of Reading Strategies

According to the survey results, the majority of students do not routinely practice many of the reading strategies that characterize strong readers. Of particular concern is the finding that only a quarter of the students ''often'' have a clear purpose for reading before they start to read. Furthermore, two-fifths ''never'' preview a chapter or book before they read it, a strategy which is especially relevant to expository text. The data indicating that over a third of the students ''never'' make use of graphs, tables, charts and pictures while reading are also disturbing given that there is an increasing demand for the use of this strategy in daily life. The only reading strategy which the majority of students identified as being in frequent use was that of keeping their minds on what they read.

The students' observations regarding teacher-facilitated use of reading strategies point to some positive as well as some negative practices. According to the students' perceptions, the majority of teachers regularly (from about half to almost all the time) include activities that help students prepare for reading. Only a relatively small percentage, however, regularly facilitate students' reading by helping them establish a purpose prior to reading and/or by helping them decide which strategy to use for a particular reading task. These findings, combined with the evidence that students make limited independent use of pre-reading strategies, may be an indication that teachers need to place greater emphasis on identifying pre-reading activities.

The survey results further indicate that over half the teachers frequently give students a list of questions to answer while they read. Provided that the questions being asked are of the kind that help students process their reading, this practice can be viewed favourably. However, if teachers are supplying questions which exclusively value or reinforce lower level thinking (for example, literal comprehension) or which prevent choice and independent thinking on the part of students, the use of questions may be detrimental to student thinking, learning and growth.

It is possible that the students' perceptions of the use of the various reading strategies may not correspond with actual practice. If teachers neglect to verbalize the use of the various strategies, students may fail to register their use. Educators must use appropriate language if they expect students to learn the conscious application and articulation of reading strategies.

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Teacher Training and Professional Development

The grade 8 English Language Arts teachers completing the Teacher Questionnaire represent a highly experienced group of teachers. Respondents reported a median of fourteen years of teaching experience in total and a median of eight years of experience teaching Middle Years nglish Language Arts. The observation that many teachers currently teaching grade 8 English Language Arts appear to have spent time teaching at other levels and/or other curricula raises questions about whether these teachers are teaching in or outside their area of specialization or expertise and whether they have received adequate professional development for their new tasks.

According to the survey responses, teachers have acquired very little recent academic training in English or in the teaching of reading and English Language Arts. (The high non-response rate for the items inquiring about academic training in these areas suggests that many teachers were reluctant to provide this information and places limitations on the interpretation of the findings.) Nearly all teachers reported having had some professional development opportunities related to reading/English Language Arts in the past five years, although the median number of hours of professional development taken in these areas during that five-year period was only two hours per year. This apparent shortage of professional development activity leads to speculations about whether the time available for such activity has been reduced, whether reading/language arts are not regarded as important components of professional development, and who has or takes educational leadership or responsibility for meeting teachers' professional needs.

The survey information strongly suggests teachers are receiving inadequate support from educational leaders with respect to promoting and encouraging the reading of professional literature. It also suggests a correspondence between the availability of professional reading materials in school and the extent to which teachers make use of professional literature related to reading/language arts. A process needs to be established whereby teachers are encouraged to participate in identifying their professional development needs and in choosing the kinds of resources that will help meet these needs.

In rating their need for professional development on various topics listed in the survey, a small majority of teachers registered some or great need in theory-related areas, while nearly all registered some or great need with respect to practical application topics such as evaluation techniques for reading, strategies for specific types of text and reading processes including content area reading strategies, and teaching approaches. The high response rate for this item may be a further indication of the urgency of teachers' professional development needs and their desire to be involved in decisions relating to professional development.

Given their limited dependence on academic course work to upgrade their knowledge, and their low participation in professional development sessions in the areas of reading/English Language Arts during recent years, it is perhaps not surprising that such a high percentage of teachers reported either a partial understanding or lack of understanding of some major areas of reading instruction currently emphasized in the curriculum. According to the self-ratings reported in the survey, less than half the teachers feel they have a thorough understanding of the teaching of eading strategies, reader response, developmental reading, and reading cuing systems, and only a small majority feel they have a thorough grasp of content area reading, reading/writing portfolios, whole language, and bulk reading. Clearly, a higher level of knowledge of reading instruction would be desirable.

Despite reporting limited involvement in academic and professional development activity in the five years preceding the survey, nearly all teachers observed changes in their teaching practice during that time. The majority of teachers attributed these changes to the influence of professional development sessions/activities and their own professional reading/study, and close to half credited the influence of collegial interaction. Less than a third cited curriculum guides and divisional/school policy/philosophy as factors contributing to instructional changes. Overall, the survey data suggest that personal initiative and interaction with colleagues may have played a somewhat greater role in shaping change than educational leadership from schools and school divisions, universities, and Manitoba Education and Training.

Taking into consideration their university education, professional development and experience, nearly all teachers judged themselves to be qualified or highly qualified to teach grade 8 English Language Arts. In many instances the teachers' self-ratings may have been made more on the strength of their experience than on their recent involvement in academic course work or professional development sessions.

School Organization

The finding that only about half the survey participants teach grade 8 English Language Arts by "choice" (while the rest do so by "negotiated choice" or by "assignment") may be a further indication that many teachers may be teaching outside their area of expertise, which also increases the need for professional development.

The survey data reveal that a large majority of teachers feel they have extensive influence over decisions related to how the English Language Arts program is taught, but have limited influence over decisions related to teaching resources such as the amount and kind of professional development opportunities made available and the selection of school library materials. Both of these teaching resources are essential for effective teaching, particularly if teachers are teaching outside their area of expertise and at a time when major shifts in curriculum/educational emphases are taking place.

It is possible, however, that the teachers' perceptions of the extent of their decision-making influence is incommensurate with their actual influence, in which case teachers may need to re-examine their perceptions. In any case, teachers should either have more influence or exercise the influence they have. It is crucial that processes be put in place to ensure active teacher involvement in professional development planning/decisions and in library material selection. Such a process might include opportunities for more collegial connections to promote planning of school-based professional development activity, sharing of professional information, and modelling of teaching innovations.

In addition to reporting limited influence over decisions related to teaching resources, teachers reported limited availability of various types of support services in their schools. A significant percentage of teachers indicated that the respective services were ''not available.'' The response option ''not available'' could have been interpreted in a number of different ways: not offered in the school; not accessible even if personnel are ostensibly available; or not necessary/ applicable (as determined by size of school/division, the needs of the local student population, and policy decisions). It is not clear how teachers interpreted this category. Regardless of whether the support services exist, a high percentage of teachers feel they do not have access to them. It is imperative that local jurisdictions apply the survey data to their particular situations.

The Curriculum

Although almost every teacher professed to have a copy of the two curriculum guides, *English Language Arts: Overview K-12* and *English Language Arts: Middle Years*, only about half the teachers claimed to have a copy of the *Middle Years Source Book.* Administrators need to ensure that teachers are aware of the existence of and have access to curriculum support materials, particularly considering the number of teachers teaching English Language Arts by assignment, rather than by choice.

While most teachers indicated their satisfaction with the various components of the curriculum documents, the vast majority of teachers indicated that they make infrequent or no use of these three documents. At the same time, very few teachers judged their knowledge of the curriculum to be inadequate, and virtually all teachers rated their understanding of what grade 8 English Language Arts students should be learning and of appropriate teaching strategies very highly. This is somewhat surprising when linked to the level of student achievement on the interpretive and critical-reflective comprehension subtests. Teachers may need to reflect on the level of their knowledge about curriculum approaches and strategies which facilitate higher-order reading and thinking.

Teaching Materials

The survey data regarding the frequency with which teachers used a specified list of teaching materials during the 1991-92 school year suggest that teachers use a variety of different materials in their teaching of reading/English Language Arts, although the frequency of use varies considerably. Teachers claimed to make the most frequent use of content area material and reference materials. However, survey respondents may have applied varying interpretations to the terms designating the various teaching materials in the survey. For example, instead of interpreting the term ''content area material'' as expository material written for any subject, some teachers may have thought it referred to literary material or to material related specifically to English Language Arts. Given the scope for varying interpretations of the terms, the results regarding the use of specific teaching materials may be inconclusive.

On the whole, teachers appear to be satisfied both with their access to teaching materials and with the content of available materials. It is noteworthy, however, that whereas approximately half the teachers felt they had good or excellent access to information about new materials, the other half felt they had fair or poor access. This raises the question of whether teachers are aware of available resources (for example, Manitoba Education and Training evaluates materials and provides extensive lists of approved and recommended materials in the Manitoba Text Book Bureau catalogue). It is encouraging to note that a large majority of teachers are able to purchase materials not on the Manitoba Text Book Bureau recommended/approved textbook list. What is of concern, however, is that only about a quarter of the teachers surveyed indicated that their school has a review process for evaluating these materials. To encourage and assist teachers in choosing appropriate classroom materials, Manitoba Education and Training may need to publicize more widely its criteria/process for evaluating and selecting material contained in the *Selection of Learning Resources: Policies and Procedures for Manitoba Schools* (1990) published by Manitoba Education and Training. Schools and school divisions should also be reminded of Manitoba's *School Library Policy Statement* (1991).

Teaching Practices

Some favourable trends are evident in the survey data regarding teaching practices. With respect to teacher-centered activities, it is encouraging to note that a vast majority of teachers professed to read aloud to students regularly (daily or weekly) and that the use of mini-lessons to the whole class is much more common than the use of lectures to the whole class. The data pointing to the frequent use of both large-group discussion and small-group work for discussion, sharing, and assignment completion by nearly all teachers are likewise significant, particularly considering that interactive learning experiences play a major role in enabling students to develop interpretive and critical-reflective comprehension. In addition to including small-group work on a regular basis, the majority of teachers appear to be using a variety of other student-centered activities in their teaching of reading/English Language Arts, a finding which is consistent with the curriculum emphasis on student-centered activity. Teachers need to be commended on their use of a variety of teaching strategies and encouraged to continue to explore a wide range of available options for student-centered activities.

The importance ratings of various dimensions of reading instruction similarly suggest that teachers perceive a variety of teaching practices to be desirable and important. Significantly, almost all teachers emphasized the importance of "opportunities for personal response" and "variety of reading material." It is also noteworthy that almost three-quarters of the teachers ascribed great importance to "pre-reading activities and setting purpose for reading." Just under two-thirds stressed the value of "student understanding and use of specific strategies for reading different types of materials."

Evaluation

The survey data suggest that most English Language Arts teachers ascribe some or great value to a variety of products and processes in evaluating student progress in reading. Of particular significance is the finding that the majority of teachers emphasize the importance of the following five processes: attitudes to reading; group participation; self-evaluation; individual conferencing; and observation.

One major concern emerging from the results is that less than a third of the teachers rated strategy evaluation as very important, even though in another part of the survey nearly two-thirds emphasized the importance of "student understanding and use of specific strategies for reading different types of text." If teachers do not value the assessment of reading strategies, they may also neglect to incorporate the teaching of reading strategies. The low value placed on strategy evaluation and the limited or lack of understanding of the teaching of reading strategies reported by the majority of teachers may be indicative of teachers' need for assistance in this area. Significantly, almost all teachers registered some or great need for professional development on the topic of "strategies for specific types of text and reading processes including content area reading strategies." It is essential that educational leaders respond to this need for assistance.

SUMMARY OF GRADE 8 READING ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Student Test Findings

Overall, students appear to be more proficient at tasks requiring literal comprehension than they are at tasks demanding inferential and critical-reflective comprehension. This observation raises concerns about whether the instructional time spent on developing literal comprehension skills is disproportionate to the time spent on developing inferential and critical-reflective comprehension skills, and whether students are involved in appropriate activities through which to explore inferential and critical-reflective reading tasks. The students' performance may be an indication that they have insufficient opportunities to engage in co-operative and collaborative reading activities which are conducive to learning and applying inferential and critical-reflective thinking strategies/processes.

Students demonstrated strong literal comprehension skills in relation to each of the four types of text included in the Reading Assessment materials: narration, poetry, exposition and a table. Although the mean performance was substantially higher on the Literal Comprehension subtest than on the Interpretive Comprehension and Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtests, the results for the latter two also leave room for optimism. For example, the high percentage of complete and partial responses to the open-ended items on the latter two subtests may be evidence that many students have gained or are in the process of developing inferential and critical-reflective comprehension skills. The open-ended responses demonstrate, however, that a high percentage of students need to gain more experience and skill in providing appropriate evidence of their reading comprehension. Furthermore, the comparatively high non-response rate for several open-ended items relying extensively on students' ability to link reading material with prior knowledge/experience also suggests that many students require guidance in developing their understanding of the interrelationship between reading and the real world.

A major concern identified in the assessment findings is that students lack sufficient experience and skill in handling a wide range of questions. Many students had great difficulty with questions that were worded using complex sentence structure (items 24, E). Furthermore, students had difficulty responding to questions demanding higher-level literal comprehension skills as well as to questions requiring higher-level thinking skills such as inferring, synthesizing and evaluating. Throughout the assessment many students rarely went beyond the literal level.

The observation that students' inferential and critical-reflective skills may be less well developed than their literal comprehension skills is most clearly evident in a comparison of the results for the items relating to text presented in tabular form. Whereas most students were able to read the explicitly stated statistical information with apparent ease, a high percentage had difficulty manipulating and interpreting the data, skills which may best be developed through interactive learning experiences.

Students also had considerable difficulty with some of the assessment items requiring an interpretation of poetry. As the structure of poetry is so variable, it is essential that students have a range of strategies and processes with which to approach poetry independently. Discussion and other interactive experiences may be essential means of developing independent processing skills relating to poetry.

A review of the test results further reveals that many students are insufficiently aware of the variety of reading strategies that are available to them and/or that are appropriate for various types of texts; consequently, they do not make the conscious choices required to read effectively. In general, students appear to be more competent at and/or experienced in dealing with narrative text than they are dealing with other types of reading materials. There are clear indications that many students do not know how to approach and process various types of expository text. Certainly, many students appear to have difficulty handling different formats of this text, which raises the question of whether students are given appropriate experiences to help them differentiate between various types of exposition.

These findings raise concerns about whether reading content area materials is being taught and who is teaching it. As literacy involves comprehension of all types of text, the recognition and use of the thinking and metacognitive strategies involved in the reading process need to be taught in all subjects and grades. Clearly the teaching of reading is the responsibility not only of English Language Arts teachers, but also of every teacher across the curriculum.

Implications of Survey Findings for Test Results

The teacher survey and the student reading survey were included in the 1992 Reading Assessment to give both teachers and students an opportunity to express their views on the importance and implementation of various aspects of reading in the English Language Arts program. In many respects, the teachers' reports of classroom practices may well be more informed and realistic than the students' accounts. Nevertheless, what students perceive to be happening merits serious consideration. Ultimately, both the teachers' and students' responses, and the apparent inconsistencies between them, must be viewed in the light of students' performance on the Reading Assessment and the English Language Arts curriculum guidelines.

The reading survey findings support the test results which suggest that many students have difficulty interpreting and evaluating poetry, exposition and statistical information on their own and that they may require interactive learning experiences to develop and strengthen the ability to process various types of text at an inferential or critical-reflective level. For example, the survey data indicating that less than a third of the students read poetry and non-fiction and less than two-fifths read maps, charts and graphs outside of school may reflect and contribute to students' difficulty in these areas.

A consistent message emerging from the reading survey results is that students have inadequate exposure to interactive learning experiences that allow for the kind of open-ended responses that enable them to develop and strengthen their inferential and critical-reflective thinking skills. According to the survey data, little more than a quarter of the students "often" participate in activities such as oral reading and reading to prepare for oral discussion or oral reports, approximately a fifth "often" participate in shared reading (pairs, literature circles), and a little over a quarter are given daily or weekly opportunities to work in pairs or small groups for reading activities. The lack of emphasis on shared reading experiences reported by a substantial majority of students is somewhat inconsistent with the teacher survey data indicating that just over four-fifths of the teachers create daily or weekly opportunities for small-group work for discussion, sharing or assignment completion. It may be argued that the teachers' perceptions likely correspond more closely with actual classroom practices than the students' perceptions; however, students' performance on the Reading Assessment reflects a need for the continued use of or more extensive/appropriate use of interactive learning experiences. The seeming discrepancy in the teacher and student survey results, combined with student performance on the test, suggests that more interactive activities should be encouraged in instructional situations.

The apparent scarcity of interactive reading experiences in many classrooms is inconsistent with the English Language Arts curriculum which emphasizes the importance of cooperative and collaborative learning experiences. In some cases, the omission of interactive reading activities may well be a reflection of imposed time restrictions. It is crucial that time allotments accommodate experiences that will promote rather than curtail the attainment of reading objectives such as the development of interpretive and critical-reflective comprehension. To allow some interactive experiences to happen, there needs to be flexibility both in the way timetables are structured and in the way the time available is used. Some experiences may well require more than a single period. Clearly, adequate time allotment is an essential factor in the development of higher-level thinking skills.

Both the student and teacher survey results suggest that the curriculum objective of exploring a wide variety of reading material in the English Language Arts program is pursued or realized in the majority of classrooms. There is also evidence that further efforts may need to be made in attaining the appropriate balance of reading materials. In estimating the frequency with which various types of texts are read in school, students reported reading narrative text with the greatest frequency, whereas teachers claimed to make the most frequent use of content area material and reference materials in the reading/English Language Arts program. The teacher survey results regarding the extensive use of expository text are somewhat surprising, given that the test results indicate students have greater difficulty processing expository materials than they do processing other types of text. It is possible that while teachers may be using informational literature in their teaching, they may not be teaching strategies for content-area reading.

The student test results and the reading survey results reveal that students need greater skill in applying appropriate strategies for different types of text (particularly various types of expository text), as well as greater conscious awareness of the use of reading strategies. In view of these findings, the teachers' seemingly contradictory responses to survey questions inquiring about reading strategies are of major concern. Although nearly two-thirds of the teachers emphasized the value of ''student understanding and use of specific strategies for reading different types of materials,'' less than one-third emphasized the importance of ''strategy evaluation.'' In rating their knowledge of various areas of reading instruction emphasized in the curriculum, over half the teachers reported a partial understanding or lack of understanding of ''the teaching of reading strategies.'' Nearly all registered a need for professional development on the topic of ''strategies for specific types of text and reading processes including content area reading strategies.'' The apparent discrepancies give a strong message that teachers need assistance in integrating educational principles with teaching practices. Schools/divisions will need to examine their own needs in this area.

The student reading survey data suggest that many teachers are not meeting the balance of goals and objectives specified in the curriculum guidelines. There appears to be an imbalance of teacher-directed and student-directed (self-directed) behaviour. Judging from the students' perceptions recorded in the survey, teachers are providing too much direction in areas where there should be a great deal of student choice and negotiation; for example, teachers are regularly choosing reading materials and supplying students with questions to answer while reading. Conversely, teachers are providing insufficient direction in the use of strategies which help students to: process reading independently, make choices, develop inferential and critical-reflective thinking skills, move towards self-direction, and take ownership of learning.

Overall, it appears that students need more guidance and more experience in the use of reading strategies which are essential to handling the myriad of reading materials to which they are exposed in daily life. Because the recognition and effective use of reading strategies are a key to independence, teachers should concentrate on providing opportunities that will help students understand the thinking and metacognitive strategies involved in the reading process and consciously adapt and vary the use of these strategies according to the demands of the text and/or reading situation.

RECOMMENDATIONS (Grade 8)

Careful analysis of the grade 8 Reading Assessment results has led to the following recommendations related to curriculum and professional development. These recommendations are expected to form the basis for provincial and divisional action plans designed to improve reading instruction in Middle Years.

Because reading is a crucial dimension of every subject area, it is hoped that all teachers will be involved in this process. Moreover, since the role of administrators as curriculum leaders is crucial to effective change, curriculum leaders are expected to support teachers in the implementation of the recommendations which follow. The group or groups targeted by each recommendation is/are identified after each recommendation.

LEGEND

T = Teachers
S = Schools
D = School Divisions
M = Manitoba Education and Training
F = Faculties of Education

I. CURRICULUM

A. Development

To ensure that curriculum documents are more useable by teachers, it is recommended that:

1. Manitoba Education and Training review existing and developing curriculum documents in the light of educators' concerns related to length and readability. **M**

B. Implementation

1. Curriculum Materials

To ensure that educators access the relevant information in curriculum documents in planning instruction, it is recommended that:

a. Curriculum leaders ensure that teachers have access to *English Language Arts: Overview K-12* (1988), *English Language Arts: Middle Years* (1982) and *Middle Years Source Book* (1984). **S, D, F**

2. Student Reading Materials

To ensure the use of a wide variety of appropriate student reading materials, it is recommended that:

a. teachers continue to use a wide variety of reading materials in instruction; **T**

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b. teachers be actively involved in the selection of English Language Arts resource materials for both classroom and library; **T**

c. students be given frequent opportunities to select from a wide variety of reading materials; **T, S**

d. students be taught to choose reading materials selectively and to read them critically; **T**

e. school divisions write and implement their own materials selection policies, with input from teachers, based on the model provided by Manitoba Education and Training. **T, S, D, M**

3. Instruction

To ensure continued improvement in students' reading achievement, especially related to interpretive and critical-reflective objectives, it is recommended that:

a. teachers make regular use of current curriculum documents in planning, delivering and assessing daily instruction; **T**

b. classroom instruction include frequent interactive learning experiences through which students can enhance their discussion and thinking skills; **T**

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c.	administrators ensure the availability of one or two double periods necessary to allow for interactive learning experiences;	S
d.	students be encouraged to discuss reading both in and beyond the classroom;	T, S
e.	students be given appropriate opportunities to practice reading, manipulating, interpreting and drawing conclusions from statistical data;	T
f.	students be taught how to work with a wide range of question types using complex sentence structures;	T
g.	students be taught how to elaborate and support their responses to open-ended questions;	T
h.	the teaching of vocabulary emphasize the use of contextual clues to derive implicit meaning from text;	T
i.	students be taught to recognize, articulate and use appropriate strategies for processing different types of text: exposition, poetry, narration, and tabular and statistical information;	T

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j. administrators ensure that language arts teachers and other subject area teachers collaborate in their teaching and evaluation to ensure that content area (expository, technical and transactional) reading skills are taught; **S, D**

k. students be taught to develop connections between reading material and actual experiences. **T**

4. Evaluation and Assessment

Since curricula, instruction and evaluation must be interwoven, it is recommended that:

a. curriculum leaders provide more opportunities for teachers to learn more about strategy evaluation; **S, D, M, F**

b. curriculum leaders provide teachers with the opportunities and supports needed to acquire a variety of evaluation strategies and resources consistent with the goals and objectives of the curriculum; **S, D, M, F**

c. teachers be encouraged and supported in their use of changing evaluation procedures, tools and approaches. **S, D, M, F**

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II. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Because support for teachers is critical in implementing many of the above recommendations, it is recommended that:

a. teachers be actively involved in the selection of professional literature for the school and school division; Manitoba Education and Training encourage teachers to recommend professional literature to the English Language Arts consultant for inclusion in the Instructional Resources collection and for listing in the Manitoba Text Book Bureau catalogue; **T, S, D, M**

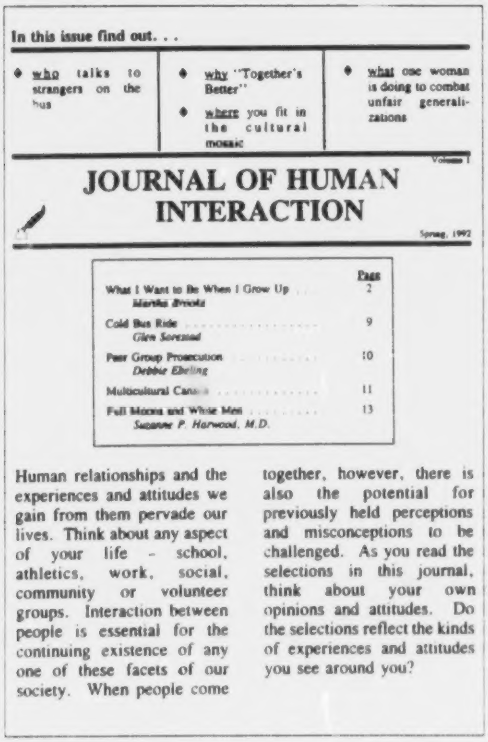
b. teachers be actively involved in the selection of topics for professional development sessions to reflect their needs for practical as well as theoretical professional development topics; **T, S, D, M**

c. administrators ensure that the professional development needs of individual English Language Arts teachers (particularly those who are inexperienced) are met; **S, D**

d. universities and Manitoba Education and Training re-examine their role in ongoing updating of the skills of English Language Arts teachers in the field. **M, F**

GRADE 11

ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS



In this issue find out. . .

- ◆ who talks to strangers on the bus
- ◆ why "Together's Better"
- ◆ where you fit in the cultural mosaic
- ◆ what one woman is doing to combat unfair generalizations

Volume 1

JOURNAL OF HUMAN INTERACTION

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Human relationships and the experiences and attitudes we gain from them pervade our lives. Think about any aspect of your life - school, athletics, work, social, community or volunteer groups. Interaction between people is essential for the continuing existence of any one of these facets of our society. When people come together, however, there is also the potential for previously held perceptions and misconceptions to be challenged. As you read the selections in this journal, think about your own opinions and attitudes. Do the selections reflect the kinds of experiences and attitudes you see around you?

CHAPTER 8

STUDENT TEST AND READING SURVEY RESULTS (GRADE 11)

INTRODUCTION

The grade 11 Reading Assessment sought to determine the extent to which the reading objectives of the English Language Arts curriculum are being implemented by testing student performance in the following five areas:

- Meaning Vocabulary
- Literal Comprehension
- Interpretive Comprehension
- Critical-Reflective Comprehension
- Reading Strategies and Process Skills

These objectives formed the basis for the categorization of the test items into five cognitive subtests.

The specified reading objectives were assessed in relation to the following four types of text:

- Narration: Martha Brooks, "What I Want to Be When I Grow Up" (short story)
- Poetry: Glen Sorestad, "Cold Bus Ride"
  Debbie Ebeling, "Peer Group Prosecution"
- Exposition: Suzanne P. Harwood, "Full Moons and White Men" (opinion article)
- Table and Charts: "Multicultural Canada"

Each focusing on an aspect of human interaction, these thematically linked reading selections were reproduced in a one-time edition of *Journal of Human Interaction*. The focusing questions presented at the start of the assessment were intended to encourage and help students to draw on their prior knowledge and experience regarding the chosen theme.

The final component of the student test consisted of a reading survey inquiring about students' attitudes towards reading, as well as their reading habits and activities in and out of the English Language Arts classroom.

In the *Student Question Booklet* the test items were grouped according to the specific text to which they were directed rather than the objectives being assessed. However, the test results reported below are presented by subtest, followed by reading survey data. The numbers presented may not always total 100% because of rounding-off or because the non-response rate is not reported. A frequency distribution of responses to each assessment item was provided in the *Preliminary Report*.

FOCUSING AND PRIOR KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONS

ITEMS: Multiple-choice: 1—10

Students were given a general introduction to the assessment and brief introductory notes to each part of the assessment to assist them in preparing for the reading experiences to follow. In addition, they were presented with an introductory set of ten focusing statements directing their attention to the reading tasks ahead. In responding to these statements, students were required to draw on their prior knowledge and experience regarding the theme of human interaction.

The response rate for this section was remarkably high: over 99% of the assessment participants responded to each of the ten focusing statements (items 1-10). These results strongly suggest that most students were beginning to think about and attempting to gain access to prior knowledge regarding the issues addressed in the assessment prior to the actual assessment, thereby fulfilling the intent of the focusing questions.

MEANING VOCABULARY

ITEMS: Multiple-Choice: 17, 32, 37, 42, 43, 46

OBJECTIVE: **Meaning Vocabulary**

- Understanding words in context.
  - Explicit contextual use: the meaning is stated in the text.
  - Implicit contextual use: the meaning is suggested by the text.

Of the six items assessing the Meaning Vocabulary objective, four related to the expository article and one each to the narrative and table/charts. All six items were presented in a multiple-choice format, with four possible response options. In five of the items students were referred to a specific paragraph in a reading selection and asked to identify the correct meaning of a word based on the context in which it appeared. The item relating to the table/charts asked students to choose the correct word describing information obtainable from an interpretation of statistical data.

The Meaning Vocabulary subtest was intended to measure whether students could recognize and derive meaning from words in context, rather than in isolation. In order to select the correct response, students either had to recall the meaning of a word or observe various explicit or implicit contextual clues in a careful reading of the relevant material. Correct definitions could be arrived at through one or a combination of the following means: identifying definitions supplied directly (e.g., paraphrased) or implicitly in the text; recognizing and interpreting structural or stylistic techniques to deduce or infer meaning; and understanding the perspective, emphasis or meaning of the text.

When reviewing the results for the Meaning Vocabulary subtest it is crucial to consider not only the percentage of correct responses, but also the objectives assessed and the items used to assess the objectives.

RESULTS

As shown in Table 64 below, the mean performance on the Meaning Vocabulary subtest was 62.49%. The percentage of correct responses for the individual Meaning Vocabulary items varied considerably, ranging from 30.4% to 91.1% (see Table 65 below).

TABLE 64

MEANING VOCABULARY SUBTEST MEANS
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Subtest	Total Marks Per Subtest	Mean Raw Score	Mean Percent	Standard Deviation Raw Score
MEANING VOCABULARY	6	3.75	62.49%	1.26

TABLE 65

MEANING VOCABULARY MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Item	Type of Text	Word	Meaning	Percentage of Student Responses Correct
17	Narration	dinosaur	Metaphoric	58.6%
32	Table/Charts	immigration	Explicit	84.7
37	Exposition	tachycardia	Explicit	91.1
42	Exposition	homogeneity	Implicit	39.2
43	Exposition	anomaly	Implicit	70.9
46	Exposition	incredulity	Experiential	30.4

The results for the individual vocabulary items point to the complexity of the context rather than to the difficulty of particular words. For example, without considering context, one would expect a technical medical word such as "tachycardia" to pose much greater difficulty for students than the word "dinosaur," which is undoubtedly familiar to students. Responses show quite the opposite, however: whereas nearly all students chose the correct definition of the term "tachycardia," for which a paraphrased definition is given in the expository article (item 37), only a small majority chose the correct definition of the word "dinosaur," which is used to describe one of the characters in the short story, thus requiring a translation of the word into metaphoric use (item 17). For the latter item, students were required to disregard the literal definition of the word "dinosaur" ("a very large reptile," "an extinct being") along with the description of the character as "the old lady," as well as the most predictable figurative definition ("an old fashioned person"), in favour of the correct context-based definition ("a disagreeable person"). The last definition was the only one that was defensible on the basis of the narrative. With the exception of the word "dinosaur," all the words on this subtest were used literally within their respective contexts.

The words "anomaly" (item 43) and "homogeneity" (item 42) were used in the same paragraph within the expository article. Clues to the meaning of these words were available through close observation of structural or stylistic techniques, such as the use of antithetical statements and the use of antonyms. Over two-thirds of the students selected the contextually appropriate definition of the word "anomaly." In contrast, just under two-fifths selected the correct definition of the word "homogeneity." A partial explanation of why close to a quarter (22.6%) of the students chose "normality" and over a quarter (29.6%) chose "differences" as the definition of "homogeneity" may be that the author uses the words "normal" and "different" in the same context.

The vocabulary item causing difficulty for the greatest proportion of students was the word "incredulity," correctly defined by under a third of the students (item 46). Since neither explicit nor implicit definitions were provided within the text, students were required to arrive at the meaning of the word through an understanding/interpretation of the concepts or arguments presented in the text. Most of the student responses to this item were divided among three of the four response options, with under a third (30.4%) choosing the correct definition, "disbelief," nearly a quarter (23.3%) choosing "resentment," and over a third (37.6%) choosing "disappointment."

A somewhat different format was used for the item relating to the table/charts (item 32). Instead of being asked to select a definition of a given word, students were expected to choose the appropriate word describing the likely reason for an increase in the percentage of Canadians from origins other than British or French between the years 1871 and 1971. More than four-fifths of the students indicated correctly that the increase was due to "immigration." In formulating their responses, students were expected to observe that the table, "Immigration by Place of Birth: Canada, 1945-1986," was a more applicable contextual clue than the two charts providing statistics on the ethnic composition of Canada's population for 1871 and 1971 respectively.

Interpretation

The results for the Meaning Vocabulary subtest indicate that students are relatively successful at understanding words that are accompanied by explicit contextual clues and whose meaning is literal. However, students appear to have considerable difficulty understanding words when they are required to infer meaning from implicit contextual clues, including stylistic and structural techniques, and/or from experience.

LITERAL COMPREHENSION

ITEMS: Multiple-choice: 11, 14, 15, 27, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 45

OBJECTIVE: **Literal Comprehension**

- Understanding explicitly stated meaning.

The Literal Comprehension items applied to each of the four types of text: three to the narrative, one to the poetry, five to the table/charts, and one to the expository article. All ten items were presented in the multiple-choice format.

The information needed to respond to these items was available directly from the text, although students were not referred to the precise location in which the relevant information could be found. Some of the responses required only a careful reading of one or a combination of specific textual references. Other responses, however, required additional skills from various disciplines, including an understanding of literary terms or concepts (e.g., ''point of view''), and the ability to read graphs, use several graphs simultaneously, interpret numerical and/or visual/spatial data, perform mathematical calculations and/or estimate proportions (relating to statistics of Canada's population).

RESULTS

The mean performance on the Literal Comprehension subtest was 81.30%, as shown in Table 66 below. Of the ten Literal Comprehension items included in the assessment, seven items received correct responses from more than three-quarters of all participants, two from approximately two-thirds to three-quarters of the students, and one from a little over half (see Table 67 below). The percentage of correct responses ranged from 55.2% to 94.3%.

TABLE 66
LITERAL COMPREHENSION SUBTEST MEANS
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Subtest	Total Marks Per Subtest	Mean Raw Score	Mean Percent	Standard Deviation Raw Score
LITERAL COMPREHENSION	10	8.13	81.30%	1.74

TABLE 67

LITERAL COMPREHENSION
MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Item	Type of Text	Percentage of Student Responses Correct
11	Narration	94.3%
14	Narration	75.9
15	Narration	93.4
27	Poetry	90.1
30	Table/Charts	71.3
31	Table/Charts	55.2
33	Table/Charts	85.9
34	Table/Charts	88.2
35	Table/Charts	92.6
45	Exposition	66.0

An exceptionally high percentage of students chose correct responses to most of the items relating to the literary reading selections. The poetry item, which required students to make a connection between a specific reference to an individual's accent and his likely birthplace, received correct responses from nine-tenths of the students (item 27). With respect to the narrative, nearly all students were able to identify that the story is told from the point of view of Andrew, the narrator and principal character, as opposed to the author or one of the other characters (item 11), and nearly all recognized Andrew's mother's suggestion that he should think of riding the bus as research for his life's work as referring to a career in journalism, based on earlier references (item 15). Approximately three-quarters of the students identified Andrew's age, which is specified near the beginning of the story in a context where the character is not mentioned (item 14). Whereas the text gives Andrew's age in word form, the multiple-choice options were presented numerically.

Three of the five items relating to the table/charts received correct responses from over four-fifths of the students (items 33, 34, 35). In each case, the wording of the question/statement itself provided a clue for selecting the appropriate table or chart containing the applicable information. Thus, in order to obtain the correct response, students were not only required to relate the information supplied in the question/statement in identifying the correct table/charts, but they were also expected to locate/identify the relevant data within the table/charts.

The item causing the greatest difficulty required but did not instruct students to use data from two adjacent charts (item 31). Furthermore, the right response was dependent on correct mathematical calculations (or spatial estimations) in each chart separately and in the two combined. That is, students were expected to calculate, using addition and/or subtraction, the percentage of Canada's population of British or French origins in both the 1971 chart and in the 1871 chart (the latter providing the correct response for item 30, selected by close to three-quarters of the students), followed by a comparison of the two figures, the difference between them pointing to the correct statistic. A small majority of students responded accurately.

The final item in the Literal Comprehension category applied to the expository article (item 45). Two-thirds of the students indicated correctly that, according to the research cited in the article, hospital admissions stay the same during a full moon. Nearly a quarter (23.0%) of the students chose an ''increase'' in admissions as their response, failing to note the explicitly stated result of the medical study (''There was no increase in admissions during the full moon''), which is a point of reference for validating the author's major premise.

Interpretation

A review of the Literal Comprehension subtest results reveals that the great majority of grade 11 students participating in the assessment can read and understand text at the literal level. Their ability to understand explicitly stated meaning was particularly strong with respect to the narrative and poetry. Students also demonstrated strong literal comprehension skills in relation to the table/charts when they were expected to locate or identify statistical data. While few students experienced difficulty reading the information in the table/charts, a comparatively high percentage had difficulty extracting and using the data. Those items allowing for the use of a range of strategies to solve a problem appeared to present the greatest difficulty for students.

INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION

ITEMS: Multiple-choice: 16, 18, 19, 21, 25, 26, 29, 36, 47
Open-ended: F, I, J(i), K, M

OBJECTIVE: **Interpretive Comprehension**

- Inferring meaning not actually stated.

The items on the Interpretive Comprehension subtest required students to draw inferences from various texts. Specifically, students were expected to demonstrate the ability to: synthesize information from various parts of a text; recognize various writing techniques, including the use of imagery to draw comparisons; and elaborate on the textual material by drawing on personal knowledge and experience of human interaction. While the reading materials did not directly supply the information needed to respond to the Interpretive Comprehension items, it invited or anticipated possible inferences.

The Interpretive Comprehension subtest, consisting of fourteen items, applied to each of the four types of text, with four items relating to the narrative, six to the poetry, one to the table/charts, and three to the expository article. Nine of the items were presented in the multiple-choice format, and the remaining five required open-ended responses. Student responses to the open-ended items were matched against the responses outlined in the *Scoring Key*.

RESULTS

As shown in Table 68 below, the mean performance on the Interpretive Comprehension subtest was 53.77%, which takes into account the results for the nine multiple-choice and five open-ended items presented in Tables 69 and 70 respectively.

TABLE 68

INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION SUBTEST MEANS
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Subtest	Total Marks Per Subtest	Mean Raw Score	Mean Percent	Standard Deviation Raw Score
INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION				
• Multiple-Choice	9	5.47	60.80%	1.64
• Open-Ended (Rubric)	5	2.06	41.11	1.01
TOTAL	14	7.53	53.77	2.26

Multiple-Choice Items

Approximately two-thirds or more of the students provided correct responses to six of the nine multiple-choice items and incorrect responses to the remaining three (see Table 69 below). The percentage of correct responses for these items ranged from 30.2% to 85.1%.

TABLE 69

INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS

English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Item	Type of Text	Percentage of Student Responses Correct
16	Narration	70.9%
18	Narration	82.5
19	Narration	36.3
21	Narration	85.1
25	Poetry	38.0
26	Poetry	71.6
29	Poetry	66.6
36	Table/Charts	66.0
47	Exposition	30.2

A large majority of students demonstrated effective interpretive comprehension in their responses to three of the four multiple-choice items applying to the short story. Each of the items addressed the motivation behind actions and attitudes revealed in the encounter between two fictional characters, Andrew and Earl, fellow bus passengers: over two-thirds correctly inferred that the reason Earl causes a disturbance on the bus is that ''He wants to be friendly''(item 16)—a quarter of the students (25.0%) interpreted his behaviour as a wish ''to attract attention to himself,'' possibly confusing this with his desire to be noticed as a person; more than four-fifths understood that the reason for a change in how Andrew views Earl is that ''Earl has become a person'' (item 21); and over four-fifths correctly inferred that ''concern'' is at the heart of Earl's assistance of Andrew (item 18). In responding to the remaining question (item 19), only a little over a third of the students correctly identified the reason why other passengers did not help Andrew when he was ill: ''They did not notice''; just over half (51.2%) chose the incorrect alternative answer: ''They did not care.''

The multiple-choice items relating to the poetry selections required students to demonstrate their interpretive comprehension abilities by: selecting a phrase in which an image is used to draw a comparison, accomplished by close to three-quarters of the students (item 26); identifying the cause and effect relationship in a poem, achieved by two-thirds of the students (item 29); and choosing an adjective describing the pervading mood of a poem, a task which under two-fifths of the students carried out successfully (item 25). The results for the latter item suggest that the majority of students have difficulty interpreting tone.

This observation is reinforced by the results for the multiple-choice item applying to the expository article (item 47). For this item, students were expected to choose the verb describing the main purpose of the article, a task requiring an interpretation of tone. Less than a third of the students correctly inferred that the purpose of the satirical expository selection is to "persuade" its audience. The largest proportion of students (42.4%) indicated incorrectly that the purpose of the expository text is to "document."

In determining the correct response to the item concerning the table/charts, students were expected to identify which of the three table/charts contained the information needed to assess which of four specified ethnic groups represented in the Canadian population would likely have increased the most in a given time period (item 36). Approximately two-thirds of the students chose the appropriate response.

Open-Ended Items

The results for the five open-ended Interpretive Comprehension items varied widely, as reflected in Table 70 below. On average, a little more than a fifth (21.12%) of the open-ended responses were complete responses, two-fifths (40.0%) were partial responses, and slightly over a third (34.2%) were wrong. The response rate for these items ranged from 89.3% to 98.8%.

TABLE 70

INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION
OPEN-ENDED ITEMS
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Item	Type of Text	Percentage of Student Responses			
		Complete	Partial	Wrong	NR
F	Poetry	48.2%	42.5%	8.1%	1.2%
I	Poetry	9.6	64.5	24.4	1.5
J (i)	Poetry	18.7	51.8	28.0	1.5
K	Exposition	12.7	14.6	62.0	10.7
M	Exposition	16.4	26.5	48.4	8.7

The nature of the open-ended items was similar to that of the multiple-choice items, both requiring students to make inferences from the text. As with the multiple-choice items, the results for the open-ended items varied according to the difficulty level of the specific tasks involved.

Over two-thirds of the students provided complete or partial responses to each of the three poetry-related items. The item asking for a textually supported explanation of what motivates the silence between strangers sharing a bus seat received complete or partial response from nearly all students (item F). The majority of students provided partial responses to the other two poetry items, one of which expected students to identify or note the meaning of the pronoun reference "it" (item I), and the other asked for an opinion on what is meant by the phrase, "Together's Better," suggesting a possible resolution to the conflict described in the poem (item J(i)).

The largest proportion of responses to the two items pertaining to the expository article were judged to be wrong on the basis of the scoring rubric provided. One of these items asked for an explanation of the inferred connection between two popular beliefs, namely that they are equally illogical. Just over three-fifths of the students offered wrong explanations and a tenth did not respond (item K). The second item challenged students to interpret an author's purpose in using a particular strategy (i.e., substituting "white doctor" for an ethnic group in offensive jokes), which was to persuade her audience of the unreasonableness of judging people as a group (item M). While a little over two-fifths offered complete or partial interpretations, close to half gave wrong interpretations, and close to a tenth did not respond.

Interpretation

Student performance on the Interpretive Comprehension subtest varied widely from item to item regardless of the response format required; for the multiple-choice items the percentage of correct responses ranged from 30.2% to 85.1%, and for the open-ended items the percentage of complete and partial responses combined ranged from 27.3% to 90.7%. A substantial majority of students responded correctly to three of the four multiple-choice items focusing on the narrative.

The results for this subtest strongly suggest that students are struggling with reading tasks involving an interpretation of stylistic elements of text, particularly the use of tone (items 25, 47). In general, students experienced the greatest difficulty interpreting the expository reading selection which was of a satirical nature, and which may have had the least connection with their experiential base. Each of the two open-ended items (items K, M) resulting in a high rate of wrong responses was a highly demanding inferential reading task focusing on stylistic elements of the expository text. The complexity of these tasks may have been magnified by inadequate experience with expository text. However, the tasks were assessed in accordance with the grade 11 instructional emphasis on exploring stylistic elements of a range of textual forms with evaluation as the level of engagement specified in the grade 11 curriculum.

CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE COMPREHENSION

ITEMS: Multiple-Choice: 20, 28, 40, 41
Open-Ended: A(i & ii), B, C, D(i), D(ii), E, G, H, J(ii & iii), L, N (i & ii)

OBJECTIVE: **Critical-Reflective Comprehension**

- Considering and evaluating the implications of text.

The Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtest challenged students to reflect critically on the assigned literature, closely examining the content and pushing beyond the parameters of the text itself by exploring its wider implications. This task involved skills such as formulating opinions, proposing interpretations, making evaluations/analyses/judgements, observing nuances, drawing conclusions, and predicting or anticipating outcomes to hypothetical situations. The items on this subtest demanded a critical-reflective consideration of the text, along with the thoughtful application of prior knowledge about language and how it works.

Of the fifteen items comprising the Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtest, seven applied to the narrative, four to poetry and four to the expository article. The number of multiple-choice and open-ended items was four and eleven respectively. All the open-ended responses were matched against the responses outlined in the *Scoring Key*.

RESULTS

The mean performance on the fifteen-item Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtest was 52.53% (see Table 71 below). Results for the four multiple-choice items and the eleven open-ended items are presented in Tables 72 and 73 respectively.

TABLE 71

CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE COMPREHENSION SUBTEST MEANS
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Subtest	Total Marks Per Subtest	Mean Raw Score	Mean Percent	Standard Deviation Raw Score
CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE COMPREHENSION				
• Multiple-Choice	4	2.48	62.08%	0.94
• Open-Ended (Rubric)	11	5.40	49.05	2.10
TOTAL	15	7.88	52.53	2.56

Multiple-Choice Items

Table 72 below indicates that a substantial majority of students selected correct responses to all but one of the four multiple-choice items demanding a demonstration of critical-reflective comprehension.

TABLE 72

CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE COMPREHENSION MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Item	Type of Text	Percentage of Student Responses Correct
20	Narration	25.8%
28	Poetry	70.8
40	Exposition	88.9
41	Exposition	62.8

The one exception was the item relating to the short story, which required an assessment of the author's style in conveying her attitude toward the story's underlying issues (item 20). Only a quarter of the students correctly interpreted the narrative style as ''playful'' (presumably noting stylistic techniques such as the use of humour to convey an overall tone), whereas close to a fifth (17.2%) interpreted the style as ''peaceful,'' over a fifth (21.9%) described it as ''sad,'' and over a third (34.4%) described it as ''serious.'' This discrepancy in the answers may have resulted from a confusion about the focus of the question, with many interpreting it as asking for a description of the issues themselves.

In another item requiring an assessment of style, students were asked to analyze the nature of an author's proposed explanation of an incident described in her expository article (item 41). A little over three-fifths of the students accurately assessed the explanation as an example of ''opinion.''

Students performed better in interpreting thematic elements of text than they did interpreting stylistic elements. For example, close to nine-tenths of the respondents correctly identified the statement best representing authorial point of view in the exposition (item 40), and over two-thirds accurately identified the statement summarizing the main implication of a given poem (item 28).

Open-Ended Items

The response rate for the eleven open-ended items on the Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtest ranged from 86.2% to 99.6%. As shown in Table 73 below, by far the greatest proportion of the open-ended responses reflected a partial understanding of the assigned tasks and/or texts. On average, just over a quarter (26.1%) of the open-ended responses were scored as complete responses, close to half (45.9%) were rated as partial responses, and a quarter (24.9%) were judged to be wrong responses on the basis of the scoring rubric provided.

TABLE 73

CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE COMPREHENSION
OPEN-ENDED ITEMS
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Item	Type of Text	Percentage of Student Responses			
		Complete	Partial	Wrong	NR
A (i & ii)	Narration	27.9%	54.8%	16.9%	0.4%
B	Narration	26.3	63.9	9.5	0.4
C	Narration	21.7	61.0	16.1	1.2
D (i)	Narration	24.9	46.7	27.1	1.4
D (ii)	Narration	18.1	75.0	5.7	1.2
E	Narration	24.4	47.9	24.1	3.7
G	Poetry	40.6	21.9	23.7	13.8
H	Poetry	51.0	28.1	19.5	1.4
J (ii & iii)	Poetry	24.0	57.4	17.9	0.8
L	Exposition	11.2	18.9	65.8	4.1
N (i & ii)	Exposition	17.3	29.0	47.2	6.5

More than two-thirds of the students provided fully or partially satisfactory responses to each of the six items relating to the short story, with the percentage of complete responses ranging from 18.1% to 27.9%, and the percentage of partial responses ranging from 46.7% to 75.0%. In only two instances were a quarter or more of the responses scored wrong. The tasks involved in the six narrative-related items were as follows: two items required students to go beyond a literal reading of the narrative by questioning the reliability or validity of the narrator's comments and attitudes, on the basis of their understanding of the implications of his behaviour and indications of his biased or limited point of view (items A[i & ii], C); two items asked for insightful explanations regarding the specified reactions of two primary characters to each other (items D[i], D[ii]); one item requested an interpretation of the reaction of a group of strangers to an uncomfortable situation occurring on a bus, as communicated by their behaviour (item B); and one item sought a textually supported interpretation of the major issue or concern in the story (item E).

Numerous open-ended items on this subtest, including all three poetry-related items, involved making comparisons and/or distinctions. One item called for an explanation of two contrasting stanzas in a single poem, a challenge which two-fifths of the students met with complete success and another fifth with partial success; however, close to a quarter gave wrong explanations, and over a tenth did not respond (item G). Comparisons between two different reading selections were also required. In one instance. students were asked to consider a scenario in which a character from the short story is placed among characters in a poem and predict the likely outcome, explaining the anticipated reactions on the basis of the text (item H). A small majority of students received a complete score for their predictions, and over a quarter received a partial score. For the final poetry-related item, which requested students to give textually supported opinions or judgements regarding the comparative success of two different poems in expressing a similar idea, approximately a quarter of the students provided complete responses and nearly three-fifths gave partial responses (item J[ii & iii]).

One of the two items relating to the expository article also involved comparison. Students were asked to assess whether an idea expressed by one of the poets would correspond or be in agreement with the views expressed by the author of the article (item N [i & ii]). Nearly half the responses to this item were judged to be complete or partial responses, and nearly half were scored wrong. The other item regarding the exposition, which appears to have been the most complex item on this subtest, called for an interpretation of an argument implied in a question posed by the author (item L). Almost two-thirds of the students gave wrong interpretations. Both the expository items generated a much higher rate of wrong responses than any of the open-ended items applying to literary texts. Still, the high rate of response is noteworthy.

Interpretation

The overall performance on the Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtest points to some encouraging developments in students' abilities to consider and evaluate the implications of reading materials. The subtest data reflect a high rate of response not only for the four multiple-choice items but also for the eleven open-ended items, a finding which is particularly noteworthy given the complexity of the tasks required. A further highlight is the high rate of complete and partial responses generated for the narrative- and poetry-related open-ended items, which demonstrates that students were interacting with the literature at a critical-reflective level. However, the greatest proportion of the open-ended responses reflected a partial understanding of the assigned tasks and/or texts. Clearly, students need to develop their understanding more fully.

With respect to the open-ended tasks, students had the greatest success in responding to the poetry items (items G, H, J[ii & iii]) which required them to draw on prior knowledge/ experience and make comparisons and/or distinctions between different parts of one reading selection or between different texts. These tasks required students to extend their subjective personal response to a more distanced or objective personal response, a challenge which an average of about three-quarters of the students carried out with complete or partial success. In contrast, the items requiring a more distanced personal response to the expository article resulted in an exceptionally high rate of wrong responses (items L, N [i & ii]).

An analysis of the results for the four multiple-choice items on this subtest indicates that students are more proficient at evaluating thematic elements of text (items 28, 40), than they are at evaluating stylistic elements (items 20, 41).

READING STRATEGIES AND PROCESS SKILLS

ITEMS: Multiple-choice: 12, 13, 22, 23, 24, 38, 39, 44, 48

OBJECTIVE: **Reading Strategies and Process Skills**

- Recognizing the use of, and interaction between, the thinking and metacognitive strategies involved in the reading process.
- Adapting and varying the use of these strategies at a conscious level according to the demands of the text and/or reading situation.

The assessment of reading strategies and process skills is a relatively new area of assessment in Manitoba. Formally included for the first time in the 1992 Reading Assessment, this subtest was intended to assess and extend student awareness and use/selection of various interactive strategies involved in the reading process, as well as reinforce student awareness of the need to examine reading strategies and process skills at a conscious level.

The strategies selected for assessment were chosen largely on the basis of the specific textual materials included in the Reading Assessment. Since the list of reading strategies assessed was neither comprehensive nor necessarily representative of the repertoire of strategies to which students need to be, or are being, exposed, the results for this subtest may not be reflective of the full extent or range of students' abilities in the area. Given the innovative nature of this subtest, the results need to be interpreted with some caution.

Of the nine items included on the Reading Strategies and Process Skills subtest, five pertained to the narrative and four to the expository article. Since the multiple-choice format was used for all the items, students were required to select appropriate strategies from a given list of reading strategies, but were not expected to propose strategies. This factor must also be taken into consideration in interpreting results.

RESULTS

The mean performance on the Reading Strategies and Process Skills subtest was 69.01% (see Table 74 below). The majority of students selected correct responses for each of the nine multiple-choice items on the subtest, with the percentage of correct responses to the respective items ranging from 51.0% to 84.2%.

TABLE 74

READING STRATEGIES AND PROCESS SKILLS SUBTEST MEANS
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Subtest	Total Marks Per Subtest	Mean Raw Score	Mean Percent	Standard Deviation Raw Score
READING STRATEGIES AND PROCESS SKILLS	9	6.21	69.01%	1.81

Overall, students performed almost equally well on the narrative-related and exposition-related items. Table 75 below outlines the various types of tasks on which students were assessed, along with the specific responses required for each item on the subtest and the percentage of students selecting the correct response.

TABLE 75

READING STRATEGIES AND PROCESS SKILLS
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Item	Type of Text	Type of Task	Percentage of Responses Correct	Correct Response
		Students were assessed on their ability to:		***In selecting the correct response, students demonstrated their ability to:***
12	Narration	recognize the organizational structure within a narrative;	62.9%	identify chronological progression or "time" as the organizing feature of the specified short story;
13	Narration	show discrimination in choice of reading strategy suitable for the text and the reading task/purpose;	84.2	recognize that a good strategy for reading the given story is "to read at a comfortable pace noting plot and character development"
22	Narration	identify the dominant narrative element around which the action takes place (e.g., plot, character, setting, atmosphere), and which establishes readers' expectations;	58.3	identify "character" as the most important element of the selected narrative;
23	Narration	observe progression or development within a story;	63.5	observe the action/behaviour of a specified character as the most effective factor in changing the narrator's opinion of that character;
24	Narration	detect attitude or point of view as conveyed through tone;	81.3	recognize an example of a character's use of sarcasm to convey disapproval of the actions of another;
38	Exposition	establish a useful approach or strategy for determining the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary;	80.6	appreciate the merit of using contextual clues to define the word "tachycardia" in the expository article;
39	Exposition	identify the genre and purpose of a specified reading selection;	62.1	describe the expository article as an opinion essay;
44	Exposition	assess the intent/inference of a statement/argument and understand its implications;	51.0	recognize statements from the expository article as examples of "generalization";
48	Exposition	apply knowledge gained from one context to another.	77.1	identify "articles about stereotyping" as the most helpful resource for evaluating opinions presented in the expository text.

Interpretation

According to the Reading Strategies and Process Skills subtest results reported above, the majority of students have the ability to select appropriate reading strategies for particular situations when given a choice of several strategies. In general, a slightly higher percentage of students chose correct responses for items requiring an identification of strategies than for those requiring an application of strategies. Student performance on the items pertaining to the narration was almost the same as on those focusing on the exposition. As students were not expected to articulate strategies, their responses do not necessarily indicate extensive awareness of the strategies involved in the reading process. Nonetheless, the selection of suitable strategies for given situations required some knowledge of the repertoire of strategies available. Although the data are limited, they are encouraging.

STUDENT READING SURVEY

ITEMS: 49—65, O—S

The final component of the Reading Assessment consisted of a reading survey which addressed individual reading interests as well as students' reading practices in and out of school. This component of the assessment was included in the belief that all dimensions of a reader's life, whether they are the habits developed in school or at home, influence reading comprehension. Students were assured that there were no right or wrong responses to the survey items and were encouraged to answer the questions as honestly as possible based on their reading experiences during the 1991-92 school year.

In addition to asking students to assess their own reading skills and difficulties, the survey inquired about students' choice of reading materials and motivation for reading, time spent reading in and out of school, opportunities for shared and extended reading activities, teacher-facilitated use of reading strategies, and student use of reading strategies. The survey results are reported below.

Students' Self-Assessment As Readers

At the start of the survey, students were asked to assess their own competence as readers and identify the area of reading causing the greatest difficulty for them. As shown in Table 76 below, nearly a quarter of the students surveyed considered themselves to be very good readers, two-thirds were of the opinion that they were average readers, and a tenth either thought they were poor readers or were not sure what kind of readers they were (item 49). The percentage of students indicating that no area of reading was difficult for them (item 50) was slightly higher than the percentage considering themselves to be very good readers. The area of reading posing difficulty for the greatest proportion of students was "understanding the author's meaning," selected by over two-fifths of the respondents, followed by "reading fast enough to finish as quickly as your classmates," selected by just over a fifth. Only a few students identified vocabulary as an area of difficulty.

TABLE 76

STUDENTS' SELF-ASSESSMENT AS READERS
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Item	Response Options	Percentage of Students Selecting Response
49 In your opinion you are:	a) a very good reader.	23.3%
	b) an average reader.	65.6
	c) a poor reader.	6.2
	d) not sure.	3.4
50 Which area of reading do you find most difficult?	a) Understanding the author's meaning.	44.1
	b) Reading the words in the selections.	3.5
	c) Reading fast enough to finish as quickly as your classmates.	22.9
	d) No area of reading is difficult.	28.0

Reading for Personal Interest/Enjoyment

According to the survey responses, nearly all students read for personal pleasure and interest (items 51, P, R, S). Survey results, however, indicate considerable variation in students' reasons for reading, their choice and source of reading material, their preferred reading context, the frequency with which they read, and the amount of time spent reading for personal enjoyment.

When asked why they read for pleasure or personal interest (item S), approximately half the students selected each of the following three reasons: "I really enjoy reading" (48.7%); "to find out more about my hobbies or areas of interest" (51.3%); and "I just like to learn new things" (55.1%). A little over a third also cited "nothing better to do" (36.4%) as a reason for reading. Only 5.4% noted they "don't read for pleasure or personal interest."

Students were asked to indicate the frequency with which they read a specified list of reading material for personal pleasure or interest, possible responses being "often," "sometimes," or "never" (item Q). According to their responses, students read a wide range of materials for pleasure or personal interest, the majority reading magazines, newspapers, and comics or cartoons with the greatest frequency. The majority of students indicated they "often" or "sometimes" read all but one of the ten types of materials listed. However, more than a quarter of the students reported "never" reading non-fiction, "how-to" manuals, poetry or plays, and on-screen directions/computer manuals. The order of preference for, or usefulness of, the specified list of reading materials, based on the percentage of respondents who chose the category "often" and "sometimes" for the various types of text, is outlined in Table 77 below.

TABLE 77

MATERIALS READ FOR PLEASURE/PERSONAL INTEREST
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Item Q	Type of Reading Material	Frequency of Reading				
		Often + Sometimes	Often	Sometimes	Never	NR
(d)	Magazines	93.6%	69.8%	23.8%	2.3%	4.1%
(i)	Newspapers	93.1	52.1	41.0	3.1	3.8
(a)	Novels or short stories	88.4	38.2	50.2	8.0	3.7
(c)	Comics or cartoons	86.2	52.1	34.1	10.4	3.4
(j)	Schedules (e.g., bus, swimming pool, TV, working hours)	85.4	42.4	43.0	10.4	4.2
(f)	Song lyrics	75.8	37.2	38.6	20.4	3.8
(e)	Non-fiction (e.g., biography, science articles, fashion)	69.9	22.7	47.2	26.1	3.9
(h)	"How-to" manuals (e.g., Nintendo, auto repair, cooking)	64.9	18.1	46.8	30.9	4.2
(b)	Poetry or plays	56.9	12.7	44.2	39.2	3.8
(g)	On-screen directions/computer manuals	40.5	10.6	29.9	55.5	4.1

The majority of students identified the following as applicable sources for obtaining materials read for personal interest/enjoyment: "buy them," "exchange with friends or family," and "school or class library"; almost half also noted the "public library" as a resource (item P). Nearly all students chose "home" as one place in which they read for personal pleasure/interest, between a quarter and just over a third chose "bus," "library" and "in class," and over two-fifths chose "elsewhere" (item R). (See Table 78 below for responses to items P and R.)

TABLE 78

READING FOR PERSONAL PLEASURE: SOURCE OF MATERIALS AND PREFERRED READING LOCATION
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Item	Response Options	Percentage of Students Selecting Response
P. Where do you obtain your reading materials for your pleasure or personal interest reading?	a) School or class library	56.8%
	b) Public library	48.2
	c) Buy them	69.6
	d) Exchange with friends or family	60.4
	e) Don't read for pleasure or personal interest	7.3
R. Where do you read for pleasure or personal interest?	a) Library	33.0
	b) In class	35.2
	c) At home	90.9
	d) Bus	25.7
	e) Elsewhere	44.0
	f) Don't read for pleasure or personal interest	5.4

According to the survey results, approximately half the students (48.8%) ''seldom'' read for enjoyment in school, while a quarter (24.8%) do so ''once a week or less,'' and a quarter (24.5%) do so from ''two or three times a week'' to ''daily or almost daily'' (item 57). Overall, it appears students take and/or have little time to read for enjoyment in school.

The survey data further indicate that students feel they have few opportunities to choose what they will read in English Language Arts classes (item 60). Close to a quarter (23.0%) reported being given the opportunity to choose their reading material ''at least once a month'' or more, the rest indicating they were given a choice ''a few times a year'' (36.1%) or ''never'' (40.9%).

Time Spent Reading

While most students read for personal pleasure or interest (items 51, S), they appear to spend unequal amounts of time doing so (see Table 79 below). Time spent reading for personal pleasure and interest, excluding school assignments, in the week preceding the assessment varied considerably among students, with close to a third spending two or more hours reading, over half spending from less than one hour to two hours, and 14.9% spending no time reading (item 51).

The survey results show a close correspondence between the amount of time spent reading for personal pleasure (item 51) and the time spent each week reading in English Language Arts both in school (item 55) and out of school (item 56). In each context, the largest proportion of students reported reading "between one and two hours" or "less than one hour" per week (see Table 79 below).

TABLE 79

AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT READING PER WEEK
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Item	Reading Purpose/Context	More Than 3 Hours	2-3 Hours	1-2 Hours	Less Than 1 Hour	None
51	Reading for personal pleasure/interest	16.0%	13.9%	28.8%	26.4%	14.9%
55	Reading in ELA in school	13.3	17.3	39.0	26.1	4.3
56	Reading for ELA out of school	9.1	14.9	35.0	31.4	9.6

Shared and Extended Reading Activities

Numerous survey questions asked students to indicate how often they have shared reading experiences. According to survey responses, the frequency with which students talk to others about reading done for personal pleasure or interest varies somewhat according to their audience (items 52, 53, 54). As shown in Table 80 below, the frequency of discussion with classmates/friends is similar to the frequency of discussion with adults, but considerably lower with teacher(s). Close to two-thirds of the students indicated they never or almost never talk to their teacher(s) about reading done for personal interest, over a third indicated the same with respect to adults, and close to a third indicated the same with respect to friends/classmates.

TABLE 80

FREQUENCY OF DISCUSSION REGARDING PLEASURE READING
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Item	Audience	Daily or Almost Daily	2 or 3 Times a Week	Once a Week or Less	Never or Almost Never
52	Friends/Classmates	12.4%	22.1%	34.2%	29.9%
53	Adult	10.0	20.0	32.6	35.6
54	Teacher(s)	2.4	7.8	22.9	64.7

Comparable responses were given to the item addressing joint/collaborative reading activities among students initiated by the English Language Arts teacher (item 63). As indicated in Table 82 below, over a third of the students reported that their teacher seldom or never has them work in pairs or small groups for reading activities, whereas a little over a quarter reported being given the opportunity at least once a month, and just over a third had the opportunity at least once a week or almost every class.

The frequency with which teachers encourage students to respond to their reading in the form of journal or log entries was also assessed (item 65). While the majority of students reported such responses were called for only a few times a year or never, over a tenth were asked at least monthly, and over a quarter were asked at least once a week or every class/almost every class (see Table 81 below).

A small majority of the survey respondents indicated that their English Language Arts teacher reads aloud to their class on a weekly to daily basis, and just under a fifth noted its occurrence at least once a month; however, approximately a quarter of the students indicated their teacher reads to their class a few times a year or never (item 58) (see Table 81 below). Students were not asked to report whether or how often they are asked to read aloud in class.

TABLE 81

FREQUENCY OF SHARED AND EXTENDED READING ACTIVITIES
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Item	The English Language Arts Teacher:	Daily or Almost Daily	At Least Once a Week	At Least Once a Month	Seldom/A Few Times a Year or Never
58	reads aloud to class.	28.4%	26.8%	22.9%	25.8%
63	has students work in pairs/small groups for reading activities.	10.7	23.4	32.8	19.0
65	asks students to respond in journal/log to reading.	11.5	17.3	20.2	47.9

Teacher-Facilitated Use of Reading Strategies

Several survey items focused on the frequency with which teachers facilitate student use of reading strategies before, during and after reading. According to the student responses presented in Table 82 below, English Language Arts teachers most commonly provide directed reading strategies by:

- giving students a list of questions or prompts to respond to as they read (approximately two-thirds of the students reported receiving this type of direction from half to almost all the time they read—item 59);
- helping students organize their information after they read (a small majority reported receiving this form of assistance from half to almost all the time they read, although nearly a third indicated they are rarely or never assisted in this—item 62).

Two additional types of direction were reportedly practiced by English Language Arts teachers, but with considerably less frequency:

- suggesting reading strategies for students to use for a particular reading task (nearly half the students reported receiving such suggestions a few times a year or never—item 61);
- stating a purpose or asking students to state a purpose for reading before students begin to read (the majority of students noted that this practice seldom or never occurs—item 64).

TABLE 82

TEACHER-FACILITATED USE OF READING STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSES
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Item	The English Language Arts Teacher:	Almost Always	Half the Time or More	Less Than Half the Time	Seldom/A Few Times a Year	Never
59	gives questions/prompts for use while reading.	39.9%	25.4%	16.4%	8.9%	9.3%
61	suggests reading strategies for particular task.	16.0	22.2	16.6	24.0	21.2
62	helps organize information after reading.	27.6	24.5	17.6	14.5	15.8
64	states/asks for reading purpose before reading.	10.8	19.4	17.2	29.1	23.5

Student Use of Reading Strategies

One survey item requested students to rate a list of ten strategies as to frequency of use in their own reading, choosing the categories "frequently," "rarely" or "N/A (not applicable)," the latter category indicating non-use (item O). The responses to this item (reported in Table 83 below) reveal that close to two-thirds of the students frequently "determine [the meaning of] unknown words by context," a little under a quarter frequently "look up unknown words in the dictionary," slightly over a fifth often "sound out words," and less than a tenth frequently "break words into syllables." More than four-fifths of the students professed to "know most words by sight."

Of the other reading strategies listed, only two were identified by the majority of students as being in frequent use: three-quarters of the students reported that they frequently "use [their] knowledge of the topic to help [them] interpret and evaluate ideas," while just over a fifth rarely or never use this strategy; and half the students noted they frequently "vary [their] reading rate according to the content of the material and [their] purpose for reading," while close to half rarely or never vary their reading rate. Survey responses further reveal that over half the students rarely or never "use the author's organization to aid [their] understanding and remembering," and approximately three-quarters or more rarely or never "skim over the material before reading to get a general idea of the content" or "pose questions that [they] think will be answered in the material before [they] begin reading."

TABLE 83

STUDENT USE OF READING STRATEGIES
English Language Schools (Grade 11)

Item O	Type of Reading Strategy	Frequency of Use			
		Frequently	Rarely	N/A	NR
(a)	Sound out words.	21.4%	61.7%	14.2%	2.7%
(b)	Break words into syllables.	8.8	63.2	25.2	2.8
(c)	Determine unknown words by context.	64.5	27.1	5.5	2.8
(d)	Know most words by sight.	85.8	10.1	1.1	3.0
(e)	Look up unknown words in the dictionary.	22.5	58.6	15.8	3.1
(f)	Use the author's organization to aid understanding and remembering.	41.8	38.0	17.5	2.7
(g)	Use knowledge of the topic to help interpret and evaluate ideas.	75.1	17.3	4.6	3.0
(h)	Skim over the material before reading to get a general idea of the content.	22.7	55.8	18.9	2.6
(i)	Pose questions that may be answered in the material before beginning to read.	12.0	56.6	28.6	2.7
(j)	Vary reading rate according to the content of the material and the purpose for reading.	50.2	34.2	12.9	2.7

CHAPTER 9

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS (GRADE 11)

INTRODUCTION

The Teacher Questionnaire accompanying the grade 11 Reading Assessment was sent to a total of 318 teachers instructing English Language Arts in English language schools, Franco-Manitoban schools and in the French Immersion program, and was completed by 247 teachers. The return rate was 77.7%. It was possible to survey teachers from all three client groups together at this level because there is one common curriculum.

This component of the Reading Assessment was intended to give teachers an opportunity to provide information and express their views on the implementation, importance and/or adequacy of the following aspects of reading/English Language Arts:

- teacher training and professional development
- school organization
- the curriculum
- teaching materials
- teaching practices
- evaluation

In the final section of the survey, teachers were invited to make any additional comments regarding the teaching of reading at grade 11, as well as on the strengths and weaknesses of the grade 11 Reading Assessment.

When reviewing the following report of the teacher survey results, it is important to keep in mind that the statistics represent the responses of teachers coming from schools of varying sizes, which will affect factors such as class size, availability of resources and support services, and so on. Unless specified otherwise, the percentage figures take into account all 247 teachers completing the questionnaire. Where reported cumulative percentages do not always total 100% it is due to rounding-off or to the omission of non-response rates. Non-respondents are excluded from the mean and median figures reported.

TEACHER TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teaching Experience (Items I[A, B])

The teachers opting to participate in the survey represent a highly experienced group of teachers. Three-quarters of the teachers reported having more than ten years of teaching experience at the time of the Reading Assessment, the median number of years of teaching experience being 18 years. Just over half the teachers had more than ten years of experience teaching Senior Years English Language Arts (the median being 11 years), suggesting that some English Language Arts teachers have previously taught other curricula and/or have spent time teaching at other levels.

Academic Training (Item I[C])

Teachers were asked to specify how many three-credit courses (half courses) they have taken in total, and in the last five years in the following areas: English (Arts Faculty); the teaching of English Language Arts (Education Faculty); and the teaching of reading (Education Faculty). The non-response rate for these survey questions was remarkably high: between a quarter and a little over a third of the teachers did not provide information on the total number of courses taken, and a little over half did not provide information on the number of courses taken in the last five years.

The survey data on the total number of three-credit courses taken indicate the following: 6.9% of the teachers had taken no courses in English, 39.7% had taken from one to six courses, and 27.1% had taken seven or more (26.3% did not respond); 7.3% had taken no courses in the teaching of English Language Arts, 42.1% had taken one to three courses, and 24.7% had taken four or more (25.9% did not respond); and 25.9% had taken no courses in the teaching of reading, 20.6% had taken one course, and 14.7% had taken two or more courses (36.0% did not respond).

Thus, in total, survey respondents had taken a median of 6.0 three-credit courses in English, 2.0 three-credit courses in the teaching of English Language Arts, and 1.0 three-credit course in the teaching of reading. The median number of courses taken in the past five years in any of the three areas was 0.0. It is possible that some respondents misread the survey question and, instead of providing information on the number of three-credit courses taken, they specified the number of full courses taken.

Knowledge of Reading Instruction (Item I[D])

Teachers were asked to rate their own understanding of various areas of reading instruction currently emphasized in the curriculum, although they were not asked to specify how they obtained their knowledge (that is, whether through academic course work, professional development sessions, or their own reading). As indicated in Table 84 below, close to three-quarters of the teachers professed to have a thorough understanding of reading/writing portfolios and content area reading, and a small majority professed to have a thorough understanding of reader response, integrated language instruction, and bulk reading. The areas least well understood were: reading cuing systems, developmental reading, and the teaching of reading strategies. Significantly, from just under a quarter to just over half of the teachers considered themselves to have only a partial understanding of every major area of reading instruction listed. In addition, approximately one-tenth to three-tenths claimed not to understand four of the areas.

TABLE 84

TEACHERS' SELF-RATED KNOWLEDGE OF READING INSTRUCTION (Grade 11)

Area of Reading Instruction	Understand Well	Understand Partly	Do Not Understand	NR
• Reading/writing portfolios	72.5%	24.3%	1.6%	1.6%
• Content area reading	72.1	22.3	4.0	1.6
• Reader response	57.5	31.2	9.3	2.0
• Integrated language instruction	55.9	37.7	4.9	1.6
• Bulk reading	50.6	34.4	13.0	2.0
• Teaching of reading strategies	38.5	50.6	7.3	3.6
• Developmental reading	34.4	51.8	11.7	2.0
• Reading cuing systems	23.9	44.9	29.1	2.0

Professional Development in Reading/English Language Arts (Items I [E, F, G, H])

Although few teachers reported having taken courses in the teaching of reading or the teaching of English Language Arts in the last five years, nearly all claimed to have had some opportunities for professional development in these areas during that time. Of the teachers with five or more years of experience teaching Senior Years English Language Arts (representing 76.1% of all survey participants), 64.9% reported having had ten or more hours of professional development in reading/English Language Arts available to them in the past five years, 16.0% had five to nine hours, 9.6% had one to four hours and 6.4% had none (3.2% did not respond). By comparison, 57.4% reported having taken ten or more hours of professional development in these areas during the past five years, 12.8% had taken five to nine hours, 4.8% had taken one to four hours and 7.4% had not taken any (17.6% did not respond). Survey respondents reported taking a median of ten hours of professional development in reading/English Language Arts during the past five-year period. It is noteworthy that a significant proportion of teachers chose not to provide information on their participation in professional development within the last five years, a period of time during which major shifts in curriculum directions have occurred.

In assessing the usefulness of the professional development sessions they attended within the last five years, almost all teachers rated the sessions either as "very useful" (38.1%) or as "somewhat useful" (40.5%), and a small percentage rated the sessions as "extremely useful" (6.9%) or "not useful" (4.5%). The remainder indicated the question was not applicable (7.3%) or did not respond (2.8%).

Teachers were also given an opportunity to rate their need for professional development on seven different topics. Significantly, over three-quarters of the teachers perceived a need for professional development on each topic, with over a quarter registering a "great need" for each topic. The various topics are listed in Table 85 below according to the percentage of teachers registering "great" or "some" need for professional development in the respective areas.

TABLE 85

TEACHER RATING OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOPICS
(Grade 11)

Professional Development Topics	Great + Some Need	Great Need	Some Need	No Need	NR
• Evaluation techniques for reading	93.1%	42.9%	50.2%	4.9%	2.0%
• Strategies for specific types of text and reading processes including content area reading methods	90.3	42.9	47.4	6.9	2.8
• Teaching approaches (e.g., grouping, paired learning)	88.2	36.0	52.2	10.1	1.6
• Basic reading theory	87.4	28.3	59.1	9.7	2.8
• Use of the curriculum documents for grade 11 English Language Arts	83.8	31.6	52.2	13.0	3.2
• Available reading materials	83.0	32.0	51.0	13.8	3.2
• General philosophy of the English Language Arts curriculum	77.3	32.4	44.9	19.8	2.8

The survey responses indicate that there is considerable need for professional development on topics such as the philosophy and content of the English Language Arts curriculum, availability of reading materials, and basic reading theory; however, teachers feel the greatest need for professional development in areas relating to reading strategies, teaching approaches and evaluation techniques for reading. These needs were reiterated in the open-ended responses of the teachers (9.7%) who suggested additional topics for professional development.

Professional Literature/Resources (Item I(i])

Teachers were also asked to report on the availability and use of professional literature and its influence on their current teaching practice. According to the survey responses, the majority of schools (59.9%) make professional reading materials available to teachers weekly to monthly, a quarter (24.3%) provide them quarterly, and a tenth (10.1%) never provide them (5.7% did not respond). The rate at which materials are made available to teachers corresponds closely to the frequency with which teachers read articles from professional journals or books about reading/language arts (''weekly'' or ''monthly'' 58.3%, ''quarterly'' 33.2%, ''never'' 6.9%). Although over a tenth (11.7%) of the teachers chose not to comment on the extent to which research in reading/language arts influences their classroom teaching, four-fifths noted varying degrees of influence (''weekly'' 21.9%, ''monthly'' 21.1%, ''quarterly'' 37.2%, ''never'' 8.1%).

A substantial majority of teachers indicated that the contributions/support of colleagues and administrators with respect to promoting professional literature about reading/language arts is sporadic or absent altogether: three-fifths noted that colleagues or administrators refer to such materials quarterly (35.6%) or never (25.1%); and nearly two-thirds noted that administrators encourage such reading either quarterly (26.7%) or never (37.7%). Fewer than a third of the teachers claimed to receive these two forms of professional support weekly or monthly.

Change in Teaching Practice (Items I[J, K])

Nearly all teachers (85.8%) observed changes in their teaching practice in reading/language arts over the past five years. The majority of teachers attributed these changes to professional development sessions or activities (62.8%) and to professional reading or study (58.7%); two-fifths or more noted the influence of colleagues' suggestions (46.2%) and curriculum guides (40.1%); and just over a quarter (28.7%) credited changes to divisional/school policy/philosophy. A substantial proportion of teachers (15.4%) also specified other factors influencing changes in their teaching practice, the vast majority of which centered on ongoing personal initiative/ development and personal experience/knowledge/observations of the students' abilities, needs and suggestions. Other influential factors included assistance from specialists such as Manitoba Education and Training consultants, special courses/training opportunities, and changes in job assignment.

Teacher Qualification Rating (Item I[L])

At the conclusion of the ''Teacher Training and Professional Development'' section of the survey, teachers were asked to rate themselves as to their qualifications to teach grade 11 English Language Arts, taking into account their university education, professional development and past experience. A small majority of the teachers (57.5%) rated themselves as highly qualified, and over a third (37.2%) felt they were qualified (2.0% felt they were inadequately qualified, and 3.2% did not respond).

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

The second section of the Teacher Questionnaire focused on the organization of the English Language Arts program in schools, the influence teachers have in making decisions regarding English Language Arts programming, and the availability of support services for English Language Arts teachers.

Organization of English Language Arts Program (Items II[A, B, C, D, E, F, G])

Of the teachers participating in the survey, four-fifths (78.9%) noted they were teaching English Language Arts by choice, the remainder indicating they were doing so by negotiated choice (5.3%) or by assignment (11.7%), or did not respond (4.0%).

At the time the survey was conducted, almost three-fifths (57.1%) of the survey participants were teaching grade 11 English Language Arts in a semestered system and just over two-fifths (41.3%) were teaching in a non-semestered system. As shown in Table 86 below, survey respondents working within a semestered system reported that during the 1991-92 school year they were teaching a median of 4 English Language Arts classes and had a median of 75 English Language Arts students; those working in a non-semestered context also taught a median of 4 classes, but had a median of 80 students.

TABLE 86

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION PROFILE (1991—1992)
(Grade 11)

	Teacher Responses			
	Semestered		Non-Semestered	
Survey Questions	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
• How many days are in your school cycle?	5.1	6.0	5.9	6.0
• How many minutes are allotted to each grade 11 English Language Arts class you teach?				
per cycle:	328.3	395.0	212.0	240.0
per day:	69.2	73.3	36.7	40.0
• How many minutes preparation time do you have?				
per cycle:	257.0	240.0	230.0	240.0
per day:	55.6	54.2	39.9	40.0
• How many English Language Arts classes do you teach this semester/year?	4.1	4.0	4.7	4.0
• To how many students do you teach English Language Arts this semester/year?	80.0	75.0	79.0	80.0

According to the survey data, the "median" grade 11 English Language Arts teacher teaching in a semestered system in 1991-92 worked in a school operating on a 6-day cycle, within which a total of 240 minutes (or 54.2 minutes per day) were available as preparation time, and 395 minutes (or 73.3 minutes per day) were allotted to each English Language Arts class being taught; the "median" teacher working in a non-semestered context taught on a 6-day cycle, within which a total of 240 minutes (or 40 minutes per day) were available as preparation time and an equal amount of time was allotted to each English Language Arts class. The recommended time allotment for grade 11 English Language Arts is 110 hours for one credit. It appears that the median time allotments for a class reported by teachers working in non-semestered systems are closer to the recommended time allotments than those reported by teachers working in semestered systems.

Teacher Influence in Decision Making (Item II[H])

Teachers were asked to rate the degree of influence they have over various decisions concerning the organization and teaching of grade 11 English Language Arts in their respective schools. Responses to this question are presented in Table 87 below.

While a large majority of teachers (70.9%) perceived themselves as having "great influence" over the amount of time allotted to the various dimensions of the English Language Arts program, few claimed to have much influence concerning the overall time allotment of the program (86.2% had "little or no influence").

TABLE 87

TEACHER INFLUENCE OVER DECISIONS CONCERNING THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS
(Grade 11)

Area of Influence	Great Influence	Some Influence	Little/No Influence	NR
• Choice of learning strategies to teach	83.8%	14.2%	0.8%	1.2%
• Choice of teaching methods/strategies	82.6	14.2	1.6	1.6
• The division of time within the ELA's time allotment (reading, writing, literature)	70.9	18.6	8.5	2.0
• Choice of evaluation methods/instruments	68.0	29.6	1.2	1.2
• Choice of teaching materials/reading program	61.9	34.4	2.0	1.6
• Materials added to the school library	22.7	63.2	12.1	2.0
• The amount and kind of professional development	22.3	51.8	24.3	1.6
• The overall time allotment	2.8	9.3	86.2	1.6

Based on survey responses, the majority of teachers have extensive influence over the content of the English Language Arts program and the manner in which it is taught. Over three-fifths of the teachers indicated they have "great influence" over the choice of teaching materials/reading program, teaching methods/strategies, learning strategies to teach, and evaluation methods/instruments, the remainder indicating they have "some" or "little/no" influence in these areas.

In contrast, less than a quarter of the respondents reported having extensive influence in the process of selecting library resources for their school, or in the process of determining the amount and type of professional development made available to them; approximately three-quarters reported having "some" or "little/no" influence in each of these areas. Only 1.6% of the survey participants noted other areas in which they perceive themselves to have any degree of influence.

Availability of Support Services (Item II[i])

Survey participants were given an opportunity to comment on the extent to which specific types of support services are available in their schools, choosing one of three response options: "very available," "available," and "not available." When reviewing the teacher ratings reported in Table 88 below, it is important to keep in mind that the availability of resources is dependent upon the size, clientele needs and policy decisions of schools/divisions represented in the survey.

TABLE 88

TEACHER RATING OF AVAILABILITY OF SUPPORT SERVICES IN SCHOOLS (Grade 11)

Type of Support Service	Very Available	Available	Not Available	NR
• Library technician(s)	35.2%	45.3%	16.2%	3.2%
• Department head or team leader(s)	34.0	23.9	38.5	3.6
• Qualified teacher librarian(s)	30.4	25.9	39.7	4.0
• Resource teacher(s)	23.9	51.0	23.5	1.6
• Divisional consultant(s)	14.2	41.7	39.7	4.5
• Teacher aide(s)	11.7	45.3	39.3	3.6
• Special education teacher(s)	9.7	42.1	42.9	5.3
• Speech pathologist(s)	6.1	63.2	20.6	10.1

Approximately two-fifths of the teachers reported the unavailability of five of the eight support services listed: teacher aides, special education teachers, department head or team leaders, divisional consultants, and qualified teacher librarians. Just over a fifth also noted that resource teachers and speech pathologists are not available to them. Only three types of support services were reported to be readily available by about one-third of the teachers: library technicians, department head or team leaders, and qualified teacher-librarians. A small percentage of teachers (2.8%) made additional comments regarding the availability of support services, a few noting other types of support but most qualifying their ratings with respect to the individual support services listed in the survey.

THE CURRICULUM

This section of the Teacher Questionnaire requested information on the availability of English Language Arts curriculum documents (items III[A]) and the extent to which teachers use and understand the curriculum (items III[B,C]). It also asked teachers to rate the adequacy of the curriculum documents (item III[D]).

The results reported in Table 89 below indicate that most teachers have copies of each of the three curriculum documents applicable to the Senior Years English Language Arts program, but rarely make use of them. Approximately two-thirds reported using the documents either on a "quarterly" basis or "never," and a significant proportion did not respond. These results are particularly surprising considering that the documents are new or relatively recent publications.

TABLE 89

AVAILABILITY AND TEACHER USE OF CURRICULUM DOCUMENTS (Grade 11)

Curriculum Document	Teacher Has Copy			Teacher Uses Document				
	Yes	No	NR	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Never	NR
• *English Language Arts: Overview K–12* (1988)	83.8%	12.6%	3.6%	2.0%	8.9%	49.8%	22.7%	16.6%
• *English Language Arts: Grades 9–12* (1987)	91.1	5.7	3.2	3.2	15.4	53.8	14.6	13.0
• *English Language Arts: Senior Years 9–12* (1991)	89.9	8.9	1.2	4.0	23.5	51.4	10.5	10.5

Nearly a fifth of the survey participants (19.4%) provided explanations of why they rarely or never use one or more of the curriculum documents. Twelve respondents offered specific critical comments regarding the content and format of the curriculum documents, describing them as complicated, lacking in relevance and specificity, impractical, unrealistic, difficult to apply, overwhelming in scope, hard to understand, vague, abstract, verbose, awkward, unwieldy, and so on. Respondents did not specify to which of the three documents these criticisms apply. Since the Technical Advisory Committee members reviewing these comments have previously heard similar anecdotal comments regarding the 1987 document, their impression is that these criticisms refer primarily or exclusively to the 1987 publication, and not to the 1991 document.

More than twenty of the respondents who provided explanations of why they rarely or never use the documents made a distinction between using and consulting the guides. Most of these teachers stated that they use the documents (or select ideas from them) in establishing course objectives, planning a year's work and/or developing unit plans, after which they make an ongoing effort to integrate the curriculum concepts with their teaching and programming, reviewing and referring to the curriculum resources periodically or as needed. Several teachers indicated they read the documents upon receiving them, but do not use them regularly. A few noted they offer effective programs without using the curriculum guides.

Although the majority of teachers professed to make infrequent or no use of the English Language Arts curriculum documents, nearly all teachers rated their knowledge of the grade 11 curriculum documents as "adequate" (54.7%) or "very adequate" (37.7%). More than nine-tenths of the teachers also considered themselves to have an adequate or highly adequate understanding of what grade 11 students should be doing in English Language Arts (92.7%), and of the teaching strategies appropriate for that level (90.7%).

The final item in this section of the questionnaire asked teachers to rate the need for revision of the various components of *English Language Arts: Grades 9-12* (1987): the Overview, Research Basis, Grades 9, 10, 11, 12, and 12 (300) Elective Credits, and Bibliography. Approximately half (49.8%) the teachers considered the grade 11 section of the guide to be satisfactory, and a quarter (24.7%) felt it needed revision. On average, a little more than two-fifths of the teachers (44.0%) registered satisfaction with the various parts of the guide, a fifth (20.3%) registered dissatisfaction, and more than a third (35.7%) chose not to give a rating. The non-response rate for this survey item was exceptionally high. Since a large number of teachers rarely or never use the documents, they may not have considered themselves in a position to assess them.

TEACHING MATERIALS

A section of the teacher survey inquired about the type, range, quality and availability of materials used in teaching grade 11 English Language Arts. The purpose of this section was to determine how teachers are addressing the grade 11 English Language Arts curriculum goal of exposing students to a wide range of reading materials to enable them to develop an understanding and appreciation of various styles of communication (diverse uses and effects of language).

In the first item, teachers were presented with a list of twelve different types of teaching materials and asked to indicate the frequency with which they used the respective materials in their reading/English Language Arts program during the 1991-92 school year (item IV[A]). The materials are listed in Table 90 below according to the reported frequency of "weekly" and "monthly" use combined.

TABLE 90

TEACHING MATERIALS USED IN READING/ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM (1991—1992)

(Grade 11)

Materials Used	Frequency of Use					
	Weekly + Monthly	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Never	NR
Literary materials:						
• Novels	76.9%	32.4%	44.5%	17.8%	0.8%	4.5%
• Short prose	72.4	36.0	36.4	22.3	1.2	4.0
• Poetry	59.9	22.7	37.2	34.4	1.6	4.0
• Plays	54.6	11.7	42.9	38.1	2.4	4.9
Expository materials:						
• Reference materials	59.1	20.2	38.9	32.4	3.2	5.3
• Newspapers, magazines	56.6	20.6	36.0	34.4	4.5	4.5
• Content area materials	54.6	28.3	26.3	25.9	7.3	12.1
Audio-visual materials:						
• Videotapes/films	63.1	10.1	53.0	32.0	0.8	4.0
• Audiotapes	25.5	2.8	22.7	40.5	23.1	10.9
Integrated language series	38.5	16.2	22.3	20.6	28.7	12.1
Computers	34.8	17.0	17.8	17.4	37.2	10.5
Student-authored materials (e.g., anthologies)	25.5	7.3	18.2	40.1	27.9	6.5

If "weekly" and "monthly" use is taken as a definition of frequent use, the majority of teachers appear to be making frequent use of the following materials for English Language Arts instruction: literary texts (novels, short prose, poetry, plays); videotapes/films; and expository texts (reference materials, newspapers and magazines, and content area materials). (Teachers were not asked how copyright laws affect their use of expository text.) Approximately a quarter or more of the teachers indicated they "never" use audiotapes, student-authored materials, integrated language series, and computers. The comparatively high rate of non-response with respect to these materials may be a further indication of lack of use.

Teachers were also invited to rate various factors influencing choice and quality of English Language Arts materials used in the 1991-92 school year (item IV[B]). As reflected in Table 91 below, between three- and four-fifths of the teachers gave a rating of "excellent" or "good" to the following factors: access to a variety of materials; quality and relevance of materials available; range of reading levels in available materials; and Canadian content of available materials. The two factors rated as "fair" or "poor" by the majority of teachers were: access to information about new materials and budget for materials.

TABLE 91

TEACHER RATING OF ACCESS TO AND CONTENT OF TEACHING MATERIALS

(Grade 11)

	Excellent + Good	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	NR
• Access to a variety of materials	79.0%	22.3%	56.7%	16.6%	2.4%	2.0%
• Quality and relevance of materials available	76.1	19.8	56.3	19.0	2.4	2.4
• Range of reading levels in available materials	62.4	15.0	47.4	30.8	4.9	2.0
• Canadian content of available materials	60.3	11.7	48.6	33.6	3.6	2.4
• Access to information about new materials	43.0	5.3	37.7	45.3	9.3	2.4
• Budget for materials	35.6	3.6	32.0	40.5	21.1	2.8

Just over three-quarters (76.5%) of the teachers reported having the option of purchasing materials not on the Manitoba authorized textbook list (item IV[C]). However, little more than a quarter (27.5%) of the teachers indicated that their school has a review process for evaluating these materials (item IV[D]).

TEACHING PRACTICES

The purpose of this section of the survey was to obtain information on the range and balance of teaching strategies practiced by grade 11 English Language Arts teachers, and the importance educators ascribe to teaching various reading strategies and process skills.

Teaching Strategies Used (item V[A])

Teachers were asked to specify the frequency with which they use various teacher-centered and student-centered activities in their teaching. The order in which the various activities are listed in Table 92 below, reflects the order of frequency of use reported by survey participants when the percentages of "daily" and "weekly" use are combined.

TABLE 92

TEACHING STRATEGIES USED IN READING/ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM (Grade 11)

	Frequency of Use					
Strategies Used	Daily + Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Never	NR
Teacher-Centered Activities						
• Mini-lesson to whole class	87.4%	36.8%	50.6%	7.7%	0.4%	4.5%
• Large-group discussion	83.0	34.0	49.0	12.6	0.8	3.6
• Reading aloud to class	68.0	14.2	53.8	26.7	2.4	2.8
• Lecture to whole class (little discussion)	55.8	10.9	44.9	26.7	10.5	6.9
Student-Centered Activities						
• Small-group work for discussion/sharing/assignments	79.3	29.1	50.2	17.4	0.8	2.4
• Reader response logs/journals	42.6	13.0	29.6	34.8	16.6	6.1
• Peer tutoring	40.5	9.3	31.2	34.4	19.0	6.1
• Shared reading	31.2	6.5	24.7	39.3	21.1	8.5
• Bulk reading	26.7	6.5	20.2	34.8	26.3	12.1
• Instruction in note-taking	21.4	2.0	19.4	62.8	11.3	4.5
• Reading conferences	15.8	0.4	15.4	34.0	41.3	8.9
• Readers theatre	6.5	0.0	6.5	38.5	44.5	10.5

These results leave no doubt that teacher-centered activities are practiced with greater frequency than student-centered activities. Judging by their reported use of the various teaching strategies, more than four-fifths of the teachers present mini-lessons to the whole class daily/weekly, and just over half deliver lectures to the whole class daily/weekly. Large-group discussion was reported as a daily/weekly occurrence by over four-fifths of the teachers, and reading aloud to the class was reported as a daily/weekly practice by just over two-thirds.

Small-group work (for discussion, sharing, and assignment completion) was the only student-centered activity reported to be carried out daily/weekly by the majority of teachers. Approximately two-fifths of the teachers indicated they make daily/weekly use of peer tutoring and reader response logs/journals in their teaching. Just over three-fifths of the teachers reported giving students monthly instruction in note-taking. It is significant that approximately a fifth of the teachers noted they never incorporate peer tutoring and shared reading activities into classroom teaching, over a quarter never include bulk reading activities, and over two-fifths never involve their students in reading conferences and readers theatre. The non-response rate for these activities was also higher than for most of the other activities listed.

Importance of Teaching Practices (item V[B])

The second item in this section of the survey asked teachers to rate the importance of a range of instructional goals, reading strategies, and process skills currently emphasized in the grade 11 reading/English Language Arts curriculum. The teacher ratings presented in Table 93 below indicate that each of the specified strategies/skills/concepts holds a place of importance for nearly all teachers, although the degree of importance varies. (The various reading program dimensions are ordered according to the percentage of teachers rating them as ''very important.'')

Over two-thirds of the teachers rated the following dimensions of a reading program as ''very important'': opportunities for personal response; variety of reading materials; oral discussion of materials read; critical analysis; and pre-reading activities and setting purpose for reading. Between a third and a little over half also ascribed great importance to: differentiated learning experiences; student understanding and use of specific strategies for reading different types of materials; oral reading fluency; student knowledge of literary concepts; teaching content area reading strategies; developmental reading instruction; and student understanding of the three major cuing systems in reading.

TABLE 93

TEACHER RATING OF IMPORTANCE OF READING PROGRAM COMPONENTS (Grade 11)

Dimension of Reading Program	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	NR
• Opportunities for personal response	87.0%	10.5%	0.4%	2.0%
• Variety of reading material	85.0	12.1	0.8	2.0
• Oral discussion of materials read	81.4	15.8	0.0	2.8
• Critical analysis	72.1	24.7	0.8	2.4
• Pre-reading activities and setting purpose for reading	71.3	23.9	0.8	4.0
• Differentiated learning experiences	56.7	35.2	1.2	6.9
• Student understanding and use of specific strategies for reading different types of materials	55.9	38.1	1.6	4.5
• Oral reading fluency	47.0	47.8	1.6	3.6
• Student knowledge of literary concepts	46.6	47.8	2.4	3.2
• Teaching content area reading strategies	45.7	46.2	2.4	5.7
• Developmental reading instruction	38.9	47.4	3.2	10.5
• Student understanding of the three major cuing systems in reading	34.4	46.6	6.1	13.0

EVALUATION

In the "Evaluation" section of the survey, teachers had an opportunity to rate the importance of a range of products and processes used in evaluating students in reading (item VI[A]). Teacher ratings of the various means of evaluating reading are outlined in Table 94 below. (The evaluation products and processes are listed according to the percentage of teachers rating them as "very important.")

TABLE 94

TEACHER RATING OF IMPORTANCE OF EVALUATION PRODUCTS AND PROCESSES

(Grade 11)

Type of Evaluation	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	NR
Evaluations Focusing on Product:				
• Daily work assignments	76.1%	21.5%	0.4%	2.0%
• Projects/presentations	64.0	34.4	0.0	1.6
• Reading/writing portfolios	51.0	41.3	4.5	3.2
• Reading response journals or logs	45.7	47.0	4.9	2.4
• Written tests or examinations	38.5	54.7	4.9	2.0
• Bulk reading lists and experiences	20.6	57.5	13.8	8.1
• Oral tests	19.4	66.0	11.3	3.2
• Informal reading inventories	16.6	62.3	15.4	5.7
• Cloze tests	6.1	46.6	41.7	5.7
• Standardized tests	4.9	44.5	44.9	5.7
Evaluations Focusing on Process:				
• Attitudes to reading	62.3	31.2	4.0	2.4
• Group participation	58.7	36.4	2.8	2.0
• Self-evaluation	57.5	36.8	2.0	3.6
• Individual conferencing	50.2	44.1	2.4	3.2
• Observation	44.1	47.0	3.2	5.7
• Strategy evaluation	31.2	55.9	3.6	9.3
• Peer evaluation	29.1	56.7	11.7	2.4

According to the survey results, most teachers attach some or great importance to all but two of the seventeen forms of evaluations listed. This suggests that teachers use a variety of different means of evaluation in their teaching.

Of the seven evaluation processes listed, four were considered by a small majority of teachers to be "very important" means of evaluating students in reading: attitudes to reading; group participation; self-evaluation; and individual conferencing. The process of observation was rated as "very important" and "somewhat important" by an almost equal proportion of teachers. Strategy evaluation and peer evaluation, although considered important by most teachers, were judged to be of lesser importance than the other processes listed.

The majority of teachers gave a "very important" rating to three of the ten evaluation products listed: daily work assignments; projects/presentations; and reading/writing portfolios. Less formally structured products, such as reading response journals/logs, bulk reading lists and experiences and informal reading inventories were given a "somewhat important" rating by the largest proportion of survey respondents. While most teachers credited written tests/examinations and oral tests with some or great importance, nearly half the teachers dismissed cloze tests and standardized tests as "not important."

A small percentage (5.3%) of teachers responded to the request to comment on any other types of evaluations used during the past year in addition to those specified in the questionnaire (item VI[B]). The following two types of activities were repeatedly cited as a basis for evaluating students: oral activities (oral presentations, speech, public speaking, group discussion) and role playing or other dramatic activities. A number of teachers noted the use of a combination of different types of activities in the evaluation process.

The final question relating to student evaluation inquired about the percentage of time teachers spend in formative evaluation and summative evaluation respectively (item VI[C]). Based on their responses, grade 11 English Language Arts teachers spend a median of 60% of their evaluation time in formative evaluation, and a median of 40% in summative evaluation.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Nearly a third (31.6%) of the survey participants took the opportunity to make additional comments regarding the teaching of reading at grade 11 (item VII[A]). These respondents offered a total of eighty-seven comments. Four of these teachers noted their lack of qualifications to make observations due to their present teaching situation or experience. Survey respondents repeatedly commented on the following issues: nineteen respondents addressed various aspects of the language arts curriculum; twelve reflected on students' reading skills and motivation to read; ten identified needs related to reading materials; six focused on the teaching of reading strategies; six emphasized the need for professional development in reading-related areas; and five commented on limitations imposed by time allotments. The remaining comments focused on issues such as the following: teacher workload; the need for research in reading strategies; needs related to the 01 program; the 00/01 course distinction; needs in other language development programs (English as a Second Language); grade to grade sequencing; student writing; the process of learning reading; approaches to teaching reading; reading as a life skill; evaluation of reading; the integration of reading, writing and listening in the language arts program; and the content and purpose of the teacher survey.

Teachers were also invited to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the grade 11 Reading Assessment (item VII[B]). A third (33.6%) of the survey participants responded with a total of ninety-three comments: twenty respondents indicated they were not in a position to make an evaluative statement about the Reading Assessment since they were not involved in the assessment or had not seen a copy of the test; seven remarked on the validity of the reading test/program; nine identified problems related to the testing population; twenty-nine provided insights into the positive and negative aspects of the testing materials; three made suggestions on the test design; five reflected on the delivery of the reading program; eight focused on timing issues; six focused on the motivation of assessment participants; and three criticized the teacher questionnaire. Individuals also made observations regarding integrated language arts, teaching techniques, total participation in the assessment, test difficulty, assessment results, the scoring key, and the Advanced Placement English Language Arts Examination. The teachers' comments regarding the grade 11 Reading Assessment will be useful in the development of future assessments.

CHAPTER 10

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (GRADE 11)

The Technical Advisory Committee reviewed the results of each component of the grade 11 Reading Assessment. The following discussion represents the committee's findings and conclusions drawn from the student reading test and reading survey results as well as the teacher survey results. A set of recommendations based on the committee's findings appears at the conclusion of the discussion.

STUDENT TEST RESULTS

Response Rate

A significant finding of the grade 11 Reading Assessment results is the high rate of student response to the multiple-choice items as well as to the open-ended items on each of the five subtests. This demonstrates that students were inclined to respond to and interact with the assessment reading materials.

Although the mean performance was higher on the multiple-choice items than on the open-ended items, the latter type of question resulted in a high rate of complete and partial responses combined. The open-ended responses provided insight into how students processed the reading material and how they arrived at conclusions. They also demonstrated that students were interacting with the literature, albeit with varying degrees of success. By far the highest percentage of responses reflected a partial understanding of the assigned tasks and/or texts, suggesting that students need more experience in developing and supporting their understanding more fully.

Meaning Vocabulary Subtest

The Meaning Vocabulary subtest results indicate that while students are relatively successful at understanding words whose meaning is literal and explicitly stated in the text, they have considerable difficulty inferring vocabulary meaning from implicit contextual clues, including stylistic and structural techniques, and/or from experience. This finding suggests that many students may be receiving insufficient instruction in acquiring appropriate strategies for using context clues.

Literal Comprehension Subtest

The exceptionally high mean performance on the Literal Comprehension subtest provides further evidence of the students' proficiency in understanding explicitly stated meaning of various types of reading materials. Students' literal comprehension skills were particularly strong with respect to the narrative and poetry, the content of which likely was the most age appropriate and had the greatest connection with the readers' experiences, interests, and points of view. The students' apparent skill in understanding the literal meaning of narrative and poetry is a positive finding. However, it also raises the question of whether literal comprehension in reading is taught primarily in connection with literary materials. If so, students are likely to have the greatest experience with, and be most comfortable dealing with, literary text. This reinforces the importance of exploring a wide range of non-fiction materials in the reading program, including a wide range of transactional and journalistic literature.

There are indications, however, that students are able to understand explicitly stated meaning in non-fiction material. Students demonstrated strong literal comprehension skills in relation to the table and charts when they were expected to locate or identify statistical data. Although only a small percentage of students experienced difficulty reading the information in the table/charts, a comparatively high percentage had difficulty manipulating and using the data.

The Literal Comprehension items allowing for the use/application of a range of strategies to solve a problem presented the greatest difficulty for students. This suggests that students have insufficient facility in the use of a range of strategies for ''making meaning'' of various types of text, and have inadequate conscious awareness (metacognition) of the reading strategies they need and/or use. The implications of these findings are that students need direct instruction in the use of a wide range of appropriate strategies, as well as guided practice in choosing appropriate strategies, and opportunities to use them independently.

On the whole, the curriculum objectives related to literal comprehension appear to have been admirably achieved. This achievement merits recognition. Moreover, it provides incentive for encouraging students to continue to extend and move beyond literal comprehension towards understanding and processing reading materials at higher cognitive levels.

Interpretive Comprehension Subtest

Widely varying results are evident for both the multiple-choice and open-ended items on the Interpretive Comprehension subtest. Overall, students performed best on the narrative-related multiple-choice items. A large majority demonstrated effective interpretive comprehension in their responses to three of the four items focusing on the short story, again suggesting that students may have more experience with narration than with other types of text.

Overall, the results for the Interpretive Comprehension subtest give a strong indication that students are struggling with reading tasks involving an interpretation of stylistic elements of text. In particular, students appear to lack sufficient strategies for understanding an author's use of tone to convey a mood or to communicate attitudes toward a subject and/or audience. For example, less than two-fifths of the students selected the correct word, from a choice of four, describing the pervading mood of one of the poetry selections (item 25). The satirical nature of the expository article, written from a female point of view, also appeared to present considerable difficulty for students.

In general, students experienced the greatest difficulty interpreting the tone and intent of the expository reading selection. The two open-ended items (items K, M) which resulted in a high rate of wrong responses involved highly demanding inferential reading tasks focusing on stylistic elements of expository text such as the use of persuasive techniques/strategies. In responding to the multiple-choice item (item 47) inquiring about the main purpose of the exposition, fewer than a third of the students noted correctly that the purpose of the satirical article is to "persuade." Close to half indicated incorrectly that the purpose of the expository text is to "document," which may be an indication that many students approached the question with the false preconceived idea that the purpose of all expository writing is to inform or document. These students were unable to adjust their thinking in relation to a type of expository text with which they may have had little or no familiarity and which likely had the least connection with their own experience and point of view.

Evidently, the majority of students are unable to recognize that exposition can have a variety of different voices, and that these voices have an impact on the discourse and on the reader. This finding suggests that students need help in developing strategies for understanding abstract and complex elements of style such as the use and effect of tone, voice and point of view. For example, since the majority of the expository material presented in the classroom is written from a male point of view, students may need more experience with a female voice in expository writing. In any case, students need greater exposure to a diverse range of expository text.

The results for the Interpretive Comprehension subtest raise some concerns about the implementation of the grade 11 English Language Arts curriculum guidelines which set out style in relation to a wide variety of texts as an instructional emphasis.

Critical-Reflective Comprehension Subtest

Among the significant findings in the Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtest results are the high response rate for the eleven open-ended items and the high rate of complete and partial responses to the narrative- and poetry-related open-ended items. This indicates that nearly all assessment participants were interacting with the reading materials and that a large majority of students were achieving complete or partial success in evaluating the implications of the narrative and poetry at a critical-reflective level. By far the highest percentage of respondents were, however, only partially successful.

On the whole, students were quite successful in responding to the poetry items (items G, H, J[ii & iii]) for which they were expected to draw on prior knowledge/experience and make comparisons and/or distinctions between different parts of one reading selection or between two different texts. These tasks challenged students to extend their subjective personal response to a more distanced or objective personal response. The results for these items demonstrate that many students are developing greater objectivity in their responses, which is a focus of instruction across the Senior Years English Language Arts curriculum.

Significantly, however, the items requiring a more distanced personal response to the expository text resulted in an exceptionally high rate of wrong responses (items L, N [i & ii]). As the text was a complex, satirical article it may have elicited an immediate subjective response rather than an objective appraisal of the expository strategies/techniques and the structure of the text, which was essential to developing an understanding of the article. The relatively weak performance on these items suggests that students may have had insufficient exposure to and experience dealing with exposition of a satirical nature. Not only is satire unexpected in students' experience of exposition but, in the form of print, it is also extremely challenging for students since it provides few cues, unlike situation comedy, for example, in which tone of voice and facial expression provide overt contextual cues. Students need exposure to text which challenges them to move from a personal response to a more distanced objective one.

A review of the results for the four multiple-choice items demanding critical-reflective comprehension indicates that students are more competent at evaluating thematic elements of text (items 28, 40) than they are at evaluating stylistic elements (items 20, 41). This finding is of concern since evaluation is the level of engagement and style is the instructional emphasis in the grade 11 English Language Arts curriculum.

Reading Strategies and Process Skills Subtest

Since the Reading Strategies and Process Skills subtest did not assess students on an extensive range of thinking and metacognitive strategies involved in the reading process, the results may not be fully representative of students' abilities in this area. Some encouraging developments are, however, reflected in the data. The majority of students demonstrated their ability to select appropriate reading strategies for particular situations when given a choice of several strategies. Students appear to be a little more proficient at identifying strategies than they are at applying them. As students were not expected to propose or explain their use of strategies, their responses do not necessarily indicate extensive awareness of the strategies involved in the reading process. Nonetheless, the selection of suitable strategies for given situations demonstrates some knowledge of the repertoire available.

STUDENT READING SURVEY RESULTS

Students' Self-Concept as Readers and Choice of Reading Material

The reading survey data indicating that virtually all students view themselves as average or very good readers and that nearly all read for enjoyment and personal interest are of major significance. Over two-thirds of the students reported buying their own reading materials, and three-fifths indicated that they exchange reading material with friends or family. These findings reflect prior motivation to read and imply informal discussion and interaction about reading. Although the survey did not provide information on the kinds of materials students buy, one can assume they are buying their preferred reading materials.

Most students reported spending at least some time reading a variety of different texts. However, students appear to have the strongest preference for magazines, followed by comics or cartoons and newspapers. With the frequent stop-and-start reading required for these materials, there may be some cause for questioning whether the range of reading materials most commonly read by students hinders the development of essential reading skills such as reading fluency. Given the vast choice of magazines available for young people and their influence in shaping values, there is also a concern about whether students have the necessary skills to choose materials selectively and to read them critically. The instructional implications of these findings are quite clear. Teachers need to ensure that the range of reading materials explored in the classroom is balanced and encourage students to read texts that contribute to the development of fluency in reading. Moreover, teachers need to provide instruction in critical reading and examination of various types of reading materials, particularly those materials students tend to read on their own.

The data regarding the extent to which students use library resources for personal interest reading are a cause for concern. Only a little over half the students reported using school or class libraries and under half reported using public libraries to obtain reading materials of personal interest, which suggests that these centres may not be meeting the needs of a significant component of the student population. Limited access to public libraries, particularly in some rural areas, and the absence of teacher-librarians in many school divisions (and therefore perhaps no system for selecting and marketing library resources) may be among the factors contributing to this problem. Parents need to press for greater access to public libraries for their children. The role of the teacher-librarian is also an important factor to consider. It is important that teacher-librarians view themselves not only as reference librarians, but also as educators whose responsibilities include the assertive promotion of reading materials that will develop student literacy. Manitoba Education and Training has an action plan regarding library availability and library use in schools. Schools and school divisions need to implement the plan by using the supporting documents which include ways to: promote the library as a centre where students want to be and learn; teach students how to gain access to library resources; and ensure teacher and teacher-librarian collaboration.

Another major concern emerging from the survey responses is that students perceive themselves as having a very limited degree of choice in the selection of reading materials for English Language Arts classes, which may be one of the factors affecting students' choice of reading materials outside of school. By promoting choice of material in the classroom, teachers encourage students to take ownership of their learning which would naturally extend beyond the classroom. Teachers should have a range of options through which to present choice, including the following: open choice, negotiated choice, and guided choice (that is, freedom to choose within a given range of options). Opportunities to exercise choice in reading materials will help students grow as independent readers and learners.

Time Spent Reading

Almost all students participating in the reading survey reported spending some time reading. Very few, however, reported spending more than three hours a week reading for pleasure or reading for English Language Arts either in or out of school. One of the factors limiting interpretation of these findings is that the survey did not ask for details on what students were reading for English Language Arts in or out of school. There is no indication, for example, of whether students interpreted English Language Arts reading out of school as sustained reading, novel reading, or something else. The amount of time spent reading for English Language Arts in school could be interpreted positively or negatively, depending on the kind of reading students were engaged in and the decisions involved. If the reading students did was strictly assigned reading, the survey results could reflect a negative pattern of instruction; conversely, if students interpreted the question as asking how much time they chose to spend reading English Language Arts materials to extend reading competencies, the results are positive.

Shared and Extended Reading Experiences

Students' responses to the survey items inquiring about shared and extended reading experiences are largely disturbing, although there are also some encouraging responses. One of the positive findings is that over half the teachers read aloud to their class daily or weekly. A major problem identified in the survey responses is that students do not have and/or do not take adequate opportunities to discuss their reading with others, particularly with their teachers. About two-thirds of the survey respondents indicated they never or almost never discuss personal reading with their teachers. These results may be a reflection of the reality of time constraints in ensuring the involvement of all students in discussion; however, they may also be an indication that teachers do not show an interest in reading and/or neglect to show an interest in what students are reading. If teachers neglect to model interest in and discussion about reading, they will fail to encourage students to read or share reading interests. It is the responsibility of teachers to invite, initiate and involve students in discussion regarding personal interest reading, either through individual contact (for example, through informal interaction, student conferencing) or in small-group sharing, literature circles or classroom discussion.

Another related problem reflected in the survey results is that a high percentage of students feel they are rarely or never given opportunities to work in pairs or small groups for reading activities or to respond to their reading in a journal/log. This suggests that for many students reading is a passive rather than an active process. Since the majority of students rarely share their reading with others, either through discussion with teachers or through joint reading activities, nor respond to their reading in the form of journal or log entries, they may have few occasions to react to reading or develop inferential and critical-reflective reading/comprehension skills.

Use of Reading Strategies

Students' responses to questions inquiring about the frequency with which their English Language Arts teachers facilitate the use of reading strategies before, during and after reading warrant close attention. Judging by the students' perceptions reported in the survey, the reading strategy most commonly employed by English Language Arts teachers is giving students a list of questions or prompts to respond to as they read. This finding is encouraging if the questions are provided with the intent of helping students process their reading, or if teachers are helping students formulate questions to assist them in the reading process. If, however, the questions are supplied as a set package of chapter or unit questions to be answered after students complete their assigned reading, the results are troubling.

What is perhaps more disturbing is the high percentage of students reporting that their teacher rarely or never helps prepare them for reading by suggesting strategies to use for a particular reading task or by establishing a purpose for reading before students begin to read. Many teachers also appear to give minimal or no attention to helping students organize their information after they read. Since students may not always understand or recognize the strategies presented by their teachers, it is possible that the above pre- and post-reading strategies are used more extensively than reported.

The data regarding the students' independent use of various reading strategies also identify possible weaknesses. Of particular concern is the evidence that the majority of students rarely or never skim material before reading, pose questions of the material prior to reading, or use the author's organization to aid understanding. Furthermore, only half the students noted that they frequently vary their reading rate to suit the content of the reading material and/or the purpose for reading. It is probable that students actually apply these reading strategies with greater frequency/skill than they are conscious of doing (for example, students may not realize when they vary their reading speed to accommodate a particular text or task). If this is the case, teachers have a responsibility to help students come to a conscious awareness of the reading strategies they need for, and use in, their reading. Students clearly need help in taking conscious ownership of reading strategies.

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Teacher Training and Professional Development

In many respects, the extensive teaching experience reported by English Language Arts teachers can be viewed positively. It seems, however, that the Senior Years English Language Arts program has a disproportionately low number of newly trained and/or less experienced teachers. The program could only benefit from a more balanced mix of new and experienced teachers, since both bring valuable perspectives to the classroom.

A review of the survey data reveals an apparent gap in recent academic training and participation in professional development on the part of English Language Arts teachers, although the data must be interpreted with some caution considering the high non-response rate for items addressing these issues. Most of the teachers who provided information on their post-secondary education had obtained little or no academic training in the teaching of English Language Arts and the teaching of reading, especially not within the past five years, during which time there have been major shifts in educational emphases particularly in English Language Arts. Quite possibly these changes have occurred in a context where there has been little systemic support. Furthermore, although nearly all teachers reported having had some occasion to participate in professional development sessions in reading/English Language Arts during the past five-year period, the median number of hours of professional development reported was only two hours per year.

These findings lead to inquiry about why teachers choose not to pursue academic training in language based curricula (reading/language arts). Some may be inhibited by the possibility that by obtaining additional credits they will advance to a higher salary and will therefore limit their employment opportunities. In some cases, teachers need board approval for course selection in order to receive recognition for further course credits, which raises questions about whether boards recognize courses teachers want to take, and whether appropriate courses are accessible to all who require them. Factors such as these suggest that administrative decisions may work against the educational development of teachers, rather than serving to promote such development. The data may also be an indication that some teachers may still think ''teaching reading'' is not the responsibility of Senior Years educators.

When asked to rate their knowledge of various areas of reading instruction emphasized in the current curriculum, from approximately one-quarter to three-quarters of the teachers selected ''understand partly'' or ''do not understand'' for each of the eight areas listed. The vast majority of teachers also registered a need for professional development in various areas of reading instruction, with approximately nine-tenths registering some or great need on the topics of ''evaluation techniques for reading,'' ''strategies for specific types of text and reading processes including content area reading methods,'' ''teaching approaches,'' and ''basic reading theory.'' The teachers' self-ratings, combined with their call for professional development, may indicate that many teachers feel they have an inadequate understanding of reading instruction.

Some inconsistencies are also evident in the ratings. For example, although nearly three-quarters of the teachers professed to have thorough knowledge of "content area reading," only about two-fifths made the same claim with respect to the "teaching of reading strategies" which is integral to an understanding of content area reading. Since the survey questionnaire did not include definitions of the terms designating the various areas of reading instruction, some teachers may have been confused about their meaning and may have answered the questions according to their own definitions of the terms. In any case, those teachers who have been reading the current literature on reading instruction will be familiar with the terminology since it forms the language base for discussion about reading instruction.

A further anomaly evident in the survey data is that teachers claimed to need significant help in some basic areas of reading instruction, yet many appear to do little professional reading to redress this need. What is, however, consistent with other survey findings, is that teachers feel they receive little administrative support or encouragement for increasing/enhancing their knowledge of reading/language arts through professional reading. This form of support is essential for change to occur.

Despite reporting limited recent involvement in professional development sessions and activities and professional reading or study, the majority of teachers attributed recent changes in their teaching practice to the influence of these very factors. Professional advancement is clearly seen as an important way of promoting growth and shaping changes in teaching practices. Thus, regardless of the apparent discrepancies in teacher responses, serious attention must be given to the teachers' expressed need for increased professional development experiences related to reading instruction.

Educational leaders need to re-examine their responsibilities in providing and ensuring teacher participation in professional development activities in various areas of reading instruction. Staff development plans are needed which recognize that change is a progressive long-term process, not a one-time professional development event. Although the reading assessment is administered in English Language Arts, reading instruction is a crucial dimension not only of the English Language Arts curriculum but also of all other subject areas at all levels. Therefore, training in reading instruction must be given priority within the limited time made available for professional development.

School Organization

According to the survey data, a large majority of teachers feel they have a great deal of latitude in choosing teaching content and style of teaching. There is also disturbing evidence, however, that a significant percentage of teachers feel they do not have great influence over matters directly connected with their classroom teaching. Of particular concern are the findings that over a quarter of the teachers have diminished influence over the division of time for the various dimensions of the English Language Arts program, as well as over the choice of teaching materials/reading program, and the means of evaluation, which places limitations on the extent to which teachers are able to implement the curriculum.

Over three-quarters of the teachers see themselves as having limited influence over decisions related to professional development and library materials, both of which are essential resources for effective teaching. The lack of teacher involvement in professional development decisions imposes major restrictions on personal growth and prevents necessary changes in teaching practices. Moreover, inadequate teacher participation in the selection of library materials has serious implications for the availability of materials supporting classroom teaching, as well as for student use of library resources. Teachers were not asked to specify whether limited (or lack of) participation in material selection is due to their own choice or whether it is an imposed restriction. In any case, since reading materials constitute the foundation for a reading program, and since resource-based learning is a major emphasis in the High School Review strategies, there must be a systematic way to involve teachers in the selection process.

A surprisingly high percentage of teachers reported that various support services are "not available" in their respective schools. The response option "not available" could have been interpreted in several different ways depending on the size of school, the needs of the local clientele, or school/divisional policy. Consequently, there is no clear indication of whether the respective support services are not offered in the school, not necessary/applicable, or not accessible to teachers even though support services personnel are ostensibly available (for example, the work load of support services staff may be such that they are unable to provide the needed services). At any rate, a significant percentage of teachers seem to have experienced a lack of support from every type of service, which is bound to have immediate and long-term effects on their teaching. For example, almost two-fifths of the teachers reported that department heads or team leaders are "not available" in their schools. If leadership for curriculum implementation comes from department heads or team leaders, a large proportion of teachers are being deprived of guidance in this respect. Lack of access to qualified teacher librarians likewise has implications for curriculum implementation, particularly for the promotion of appropriate reading materials and student access to library resources. Furthermore, as mainstreaming in the Senior Years program continues to progress, there will be an increasing need to rely on the assistance of such support services as teacher aides, special education teachers and resource teachers.

The Curriculum

According to the survey results, nearly all teachers feel they have adequate or highly adequate knowledge of the grade 11 English Language Arts curriculum and the objectives and teaching strategies appropriate for that level. Evidently many teachers have not gained this knowledge from the curriculum documents, judging by their reported use of the three applicable documents:

English Language Arts: Overview K—12 (1988), *English Language Arts: Grades 9—12* (1987), and *English Language Arts: Senior Years 9—12* (1991). The majority of teachers indicated that they do not make extensive use of any of the curriculum documents, but only a relatively small percentage indicated that the various dimensions of the curriculum are in need of revision. Of the three documents, the *Overview* appears to be used least extensively, and yet the greatest proportion of teachers registered satisfaction with this particular component of the curriculum.

What is especially disturbing is the high percentage of teachers reporting that they rarely or never use the curriculum support document, *English Language Arts: Senior Years 9—12* (1991), a publication produced in response to requests for a practical resource to be used on a regular basis. It is possible that some teachers are not clear on the distinction between the 1987 and 1988 curriculum guides and the more practical 1991 curriculum support document. The latter publication is not a revision of the curriculum guides, but has a distinctly different purpose. Teachers need to be aware that the three documents are developed as follows:

English Language Arts: Overview K—12 (1988)

- presents the rationale for the English Language Arts curriculum;
- states the K-12 English Language Arts goals and objectives;
- articulates a framework for organizing instruction.

English Language Arts: Grades 9—12 (1987)

- presents an overview of Senior Years English Language Arts and its research basis;
- outlines the program for each of grades 9—12 core and electives.

English Language Arts: Senior Years 9—12 (1991)

- articulates an overview for organizing the year's work;
- states program and specific goals for developing language through literature, language study, listening, speaking, reading, writing and thinking;
- presents practical strategies, ideas, approaches and evaluation tools for developing language through literature, etc.

Teaching Materials

Some of the data regarding the frequency with which teachers reported using various teaching materials are open to varying interpretations since the terms used to designate these materials (for example, reference materials, student authored materials, content area materials) may have had different meanings for different teachers. Nonetheless, some conclusions can be drawn from the results. According to the teachers' estimations of the frequency with which they used various materials in their reading/English Language Arts program in the 1991-92 school year, the teaching materials are weighted heavily with literary materials, particularly novels and short prose. This indicates that there needs to be a further shift from viewing literature primarily as literary works to viewing literature as encompassing the full range of reading materials to which students must be exposed. A more balanced representation of the various types of text is needed, given that the Early, Middle and Senior Years curricula emphasize the use of a wide range of materials.

Although the range of materials used in teaching does not appear to be sufficiently balanced, four-fifths of the teachers claimed to have good or excellent access to a variety of materials. A high percentage of teachers, however, appear to have less than ideal access both to materials with a range of reading levels and to information about new materials. These findings are cause for concern. They also raise the question of whether teachers are aware of the available sources of information. For example, teachers may be unaware that Manitoba Education and Training evaluates materials and provides extensive lists of approved or recommended material, including lists of teacher reference material, in the Manitoba Text Book Bureau catalogue.

More than three-quarters of the teachers reported having the option of purchasing materials not included on the Manitoba authorized textbook list. This is a highly encouraging finding. It is of concern, however, that little more than a quarter of the schools have a review process for evaluating such materials. The apparent absence of a review process in a large majority of schools, combined with the somewhat limited access to information about new materials, suggests that teachers may need to acquire additional resources for reviewing materials and/or become better informed of available resources such as the documents, *Selection of Learning Resources: Policies and Procedures for Manitoba Schools* (1990) and *School Library Policy Statement* (1991), produced by Manitoba Education and Training. To encourage and assist teachers in continuing to choose appropriate materials, Manitoba Education and Training may need to make more widely known its criteria/process for reviewing materials (to ensure, for example, gender balance and representation of minority groups).

Teaching Practices

The survey results show that teachers are providing considerably more opportunities for teacher-centered activities than for student-centered activities, an imbalance which is contrary to the expectations set out in the curriculum. Moreover, in some respects there appears to be little correlation between what teachers profess to value and what they practice in their teaching. For instance, nearly all teachers rated opportunities for personal responses as a "very important" dimension of a reading program, and yet the majority reported making limited or no use of such opportunities: just over two-fifths of the teachers indicated they have their students make daily or weekly use of reader response logs/journals; less than a third provide shared reading opportunities on a daily or weekly basis; and over two-fifths never provide opportunities for reading conferences and readers theatre. For adequate personal response, these types of activities need to be used with much greater frequency.

Overall, the teachers' ratings of the importance of various dimensions of a reading program are lower than they ought to be for effective implementation of reading in the English Language Arts curriculum. It is disturbing to observe, for instance, that only a small majority of teachers ascribed great importance to differentiated learning experiences, which form the core spirit of the curriculum. Having under three-quarters of the teachers attach great importance to critical analysis may also be inadequate since "evaluation" is the level of engagement for grade 11. Furthermore, although nearly all teachers emphasized the value of incorporating a variety of materials in a reading program, only a little over half stressed the importance of student understanding and use of specific strategies for reading different types of materials, and less than half considered teaching content area reading strategies to be very important. Given the curriculum emphasis on using a wide variety of texts, teachers may need to reconsider the importance of teaching reading strategies. For effective implementation of the curriculum, teachers need to regard all dimensions of the reading program identified in the survey as highly important and apply them to their teaching accordingly.

Evaluation

When given an opportunity to rate the importance of various means of evaluating reading, a substantial majority of teachers ascribed some or great importance to fifteen of the seventeen products and processes listed. This suggests that teachers use a variety of different means of evaluation in their teaching.

The teachers' ratings of the importance of a number of evaluation products and processes are, however, inconsistent with their ratings of the importance of teaching practices. For example, the vast majority of teachers indicated that providing "opportunities for personal response" is a very important teaching practice within a reading program, and yet under half reported making daily or weekly use of reader response journals/logs and under half saw the use of reading response journals/logs as a very important means of evaluation.

Also of concern is the degree of importance attached to some of the products and processes for evaluation purposes. The data indicating that less than a third of the teachers consider strategy evaluation as very important raise serious concerns about whether students are being given appropriate assistance in developing a conscious awareness of the strategies they need and use in reading a variety of different texts. The importance ascribed to self-evaluation and peer evaluation is also too low, given the developmental stage of grade 11 students. A little over half the teachers gave a "very important" rating to self-evaluation, which is a necessary skill for independent learning, and under a third gave this rating to peer evaluation, which is a natural form of evaluation in collaborative learning. While it may be more difficult to assign marks to these types of processes, it is crucial that they be taken into account in the marking and reporting system.

It is probable that those teachers who gave a "very important" rating to the various evaluation products and processes use them on a regular, ongoing basis. By extension, if teachers do not think it is highly important to evaluate the various products and processes they may not be incorporating them in their teaching practices, or may be in danger of abandoning them. Teachers need to be provided with assistance in evaluating products and processes in ways that are congruent with the curriculum and with the reporting system within which they function. By broadening the concept of evaluation and finding ways to evaluate the products and processes they value, educators will maintain and enhance the integrity of their educational values and practices.

SUMMARY OF GRADE 11 READING ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Student Test Findings

Overall, students appear to have little difficulty in word attack and word recognition skills and are more proficient at tasks requiring literal comprehension than they are at tasks demanding inferential and critical-reflective comprehension. This observation raises concerns about whether the instructional time spent on developing literal comprehension skills is disproportionate to the time spent on inferential and critical-reflective comprehension skills, and whether students are involved in appropriate activities through which to explore inferential and critical-reflective reading tasks. The students' performance may be an indication that they have insufficient opportunities to engage in co-operative and collaborative reading experiences which are conducive to learning and applying inferential and critical-reflective thinking strategies/processes.

There are indications that students are developing their ability to identify and select appropriate strategies for particular reading situations. However, the assessment results also suggest that students have insufficient knowledge of the range of strategies available, insufficient practice in applying them to various types of reading materials, and inadequate conscious awareness of the strategies they need and use in the reading process. Teaching students a large repertoire of strategies and giving them experience in making appropriate choices and applications for a variety of texts will enable students to raise the use of strategies to a conscious level.

A further conclusion that can be drawn from the assessment results is that students are more competent and/or experienced at making thematic interpretations than they are at making stylistic analyses. The test data strongly suggest that in the delivery of the reading dimension of the English Language Arts program, the study of textual content (for example, theme, topic) inappropriately takes precedence over the exploration of the use and manipulation of language in a variety of texts, but particularly in expository text. This observation raises serious questions such as the following:

- Why are there apparent gaps in the implementation of style in the English Language Arts curriculum, particularly as style is the instructional emphasis for grade 11?

- Is there a misunderstanding about the meaning of the term "stylistic choices" as the use and manipulation of language?

- Is the use of language (its purpose, effects, functions, variety and influence), which is the central aim of the English Language Arts curriculum from kindergarten to grade 12, adequately addressed in classroom instruction?

- Are students exposed to a sufficient range/variety of materials with which to explore the use of language? Is the explicitly stated curriculum goal of using a wide range of texts adequately pursued in the classroom?

- Do the curriculum guides and support materials suggest appropriate and adequate strategies for teaching the use of language, particularly related to style and including examples which apply style to transactional and journalistic text?

- Does the Senior Years curriculum adequately address the interrelationships among the various elements of language study at the different grade levels? That is, are there appropriate linkages with respect to the instructional emphases across the Senior Years curriculum?

The students' apparent difficulty with reading tasks focusing on the use and manipulation of language is of major concern, particularly considering that developing an understanding of language and how it works within a wide range of reading materials is the instructional emphasis of the grade 11 English Language Arts curriculum. Moreover, since the Senior Years curriculum emphasizes the interrelationships among various elements of language and attempts to build student knowledge over several years, students should have had considerable exposure to the use of language, including style, prior to grade 11.

Implications of Survey Findings for Test Results

The teacher survey and the student reading survey were included in the 1992 Reading Assessment to give both teachers and students an opportunity to express their views on the importance and implementation of various aspects of reading in the English Language Arts program. In many respects, the teachers' reports of classroom practices may well be more informed and realistic than the students' accounts. Nevertheless, what students perceive to be happening merits serious consideration. Ultimately, both the teachers' and students' responses, and the apparent inconsistencies between them, must be viewed in the light of students' performance on the Reading Assessment and the English Language Arts curriculum guidelines.

The assessment data demonstrating that students need to develop greater proficiency at performing inferential and critical-reflective reading tasks must be reviewed in relation to the kinds of experiences that promote the development of these skills. Consistent with current research in reading instruction, the curriculum emphasizes the use of shared/interactive and extended reading activities to help students develop these skills. According to the reading survey results, the majority of students infrequently or never discuss their personal interest reading with their teachers, have opportunities to work in pairs or small groups for reading experiences, or have occasion to respond to their reading in a journal or log. The majority of teachers likewise reported making infrequent or no use of student-centered activities such as shared reading, reading conferences, readers theatre and reader response journals or logs; however, contrary to the students' perceptions, four-fifths of the teachers reported making daily or weekly use of small-group work for discussion, sharing and assignment completion.

In rating the importance of various types of products and processes for evaluating reading, only about half the teachers gave a rating of "very important" to: reading/writing portfolios, reading response journals or logs, group participation, and individual conferencing. These ratings may be indicative of teachers' reliance on traditional products to evaluate reading and/or their need for assistance with evaluation focusing on process. If processes such as discussion about and responses to reading are not evaluated, they may be in danger of disappearing from the repertoire of teaching strategies. Educators need to integrate evaluation into every aspect of the teaching/learning process. It is noteworthy that approximately nine-tenths of the teachers registered a need for professional development on the topics of "evaluation techniques for reading" and "teaching approaches (e.g., grouping, paired learning)."

Several curriculum documents produced by Manitoba Education and Training provide information and suggestions on a variety of ways of evaluating reading. General information on evaluation is available in the following two curriculum guides: *English Language Arts: Overview K—12* (1988) and *English Language Arts: Grades 9—12* (1987). Specific and concrete information is provided in the curriculum support document, *English Language Arts: Senior Years 9—12* (1991). There are also sections on evaluation in *English Language Arts: Differentiating Teaching and Learning in Senior 1 and 2* (in press) and in *Strategic Instruction: Differentiating Teaching and Learning Across the Curriculum, Senior 1 to 4* (in press).

The comparatively low mean performance on the Interpretive and Critical-Reflective Comprehension subtests also leads to reflection about whether students are being given sufficient opportunities to work with a wide range of reading materials of appropriate difficulty. If the reading materials used in the classroom are too advanced/complex/sophisticated, students may have to struggle with decoding and comprehending the content at a literal level and may be unable to process it at higher cognitive levels. It is essential that all students, at whatever level of academic advancement, are provided with a range of materials corresponding with their developmental (affective and cognitive) readiness to process the material.

From this perspective it is particularly disturbing to note that a significant percentage of teachers feel they have limited influence over the choice of teaching materials for the reading program and the selection of materials added to the school library. This problem is compounded for a large number of teachers by the unavailability of qualified teacher-librarians. Inadequate teacher participation in the selection of classroom and library resources influences not only the availability of materials supporting classroom teaching, but also student use of these resources. Lack of access to qualified teacher-librarians further limits the promotion of appropriate reading materials and student access to library resources. In the light of these findings, it may not be surprising that only a small majority of students reported using their school or class library to obtain materials for personal interest reading. These data have serious implications for the implementation of curriculum guidelines regarding the use of a wide range of reading materials.

Teachers reported using a variety of different materials in their teaching of reading/English Language Arts; however, they reported using literary materials, particularly novels and short prose, with greater frequency than other types of texts. This finding may help explain why the literary items on the grade 11 Reading Assessment resulted in a higher rate of correct and complete/partial responses overall than the items relating to other types of text. The assessment data indicating that students had the greatest difficulty understanding the expository reading selection (which may have had the least connection with their experience and point of view) suggest that students have insufficient exposure to and/or inadequate strategies for processing a wide range of expository materials. Considering that students most commonly choose materials such as magazines and newspapers for their personal interest reading, it is crucial that they learn the necessary skills to choose materials selectively and the appropriate strategies to read them critically.

According to the assessment results, students are demonstrating some proficiency in identifying and selecting appropriate strategies for particular reading situations. The results also show, however, that students have considerable difficulty choosing from a range of strategies and have inadequate conscious awareness of the strategies they need/use in processing various types of reading materials, particularly expository text. Their deficiencies are most pronounced in relation to stylistic elements of text.

Both the student reading survey data and the teacher survey data provide insight into the emphasis on and use of reading strategies in the reading/English Language Arts classroom. Only about half the teachers stressed the importance of "student understanding and use of specific strategies for reading different types of materials" and "teaching content area reading strategies," and under a third ascribed great importance to "strategy evaluation." More than half the teachers reported a partial or lack of understanding of the "teaching of reading strategies" and nearly all expressed some or great need for professional development in this area. A similar picture is evident in the results of the student reading survey in which a significant percentage of students reported making limited independent and/or teacher-facilitated use of strategies which are essential to reading comprehension. It is imperative that curriculum leaders address the implications of the limited use of reading strategies, the low ratings given to the teaching and evaluation of reading strategies, and the teachers' expressed need for assistance in this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS (Grade 11)

Careful analysis of the grade 11 Reading Assessment results has led to the following recommendations related to curriculum and professional development.

Since reading instruction is a crucial dimension of every subject area, all the recommendations in this report are of relevance to every teacher in every subject area. (See Strategy 75 in *Answering the Challenge*.)

The recommendations outlined below are particularly critical at a time when Manitoba educators and students are moving to curriculum-congruent divisional and provincial English Language Arts examinations (see Strategies 59 and 62 in *Answering the Challenge*.)

These recommendations are expected to form the basis for provincial and divisional action plans designed to improve reading instruction in Senior Years. Moreover, since the role of the administrator as curriculum leader is crucial to effective change, it is expected that curriculum leaders will support teachers in the implementation of the recommendations which follow. The group or groups targeted by each recommendation is/are identified after each recommendation.

LEGEND

T = Teachers
S = Schools
D = School Divisions
M = Manitoba Education and Training
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I. CURRICULUM

A. Development

To ensure that curriculum documents are more useable by teachers, it is recommended that:

1. Manitoba Education and Training develop ways to make the curriculum documents, *English Language Arts: Overview K—12* (1988) and *English Language Arts: Grades 9—12* (1987), more accessible to teachers who question their reader-friendliness. M

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B. Implementation

1. Curriculum Materials

To ensure that educators access the relevant information in curriculum documents in planning instruction, it is recommended that:

a. curriculum leaders ensure that teachers have access to existing curriculum documents as well as to new curriculum support materials as they are released (see bibliography); **S, D**

b. teachers consult the relevant sections of the various curriculum documents and curriculum support materials where information related to reading is a focus. Specifically, see:
English Language Arts: Overview K—12 (1988), p. 73;
English Language Arts: Grades 9—12 (1987), pp. 8, 22, and the specific sections dealing with each grade level;
English Language Arts: Senior Years (9—12) (1991), pp. 105-116 which specifically and practically deal with developing language through reading; **S, D**

c. curriculum leaders consult the Checklist for Administrators found in *English Language Arts: Overview K—12* (1988), pp. 27-29; **S, D**

2. Student Reading Materials

To ensure the use of a wide variety of appropriate student reading materials, it is recommended that:

a. educators broaden the range of student reading materials they select for classroom use to include more material closely connected with student interest and experience, in particular considering the needs of female students, minority students, disadvantaged students, etc.; **T, S, D, M**

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b. school divisions write and implement their own materials selection policies, with input from teachers, based on the model provided by Manitoba Education and Training; **T, S, D, M**

c. Manitoba Education and Training examine its material selection process to ensure that more transactional and journalistic materials are made available for use at Senior 1—4; **M**

d. Manitoba Education and Training include transactional and journalistic headings in the Manitoba Text Book Bureau (MTBB) catalogue at Senior 1, 2, 3 and 4, listing appropriate materials under these headings as they are reviewed and approved/recommended; **M**

e. Manitoba Education and Training make teachers aware (possibly through a note in the MTBB catalogue) that the grade levels (Senior 1, 2, 3 or 4) for which the materials are listed in the catalogue (especially novels) are suggestions only (e.g., teachers may use a Senior 3 selection in Senior 2). Schools and divisions should exercise discretion/flexibility in using materials where they believe they are appropriate for the language goals to be achieved. Articulation/dialogue between Early, Middle and Senior Years teachers and between grades at these levels is critical to facilitate this process; **S, D, M**

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f. schools and school divisions be encouraged to review the use of existing funds for student reading materials taking the following into consideration:

movement to expenditure of funds for resource-based learning; **S, D**

movement away from purchasing full class sets of a text/title and consider movement toward purchasing several copies of several thematically linked titles; and **S, D**

movement away from purchasing non-reusable consumables; **S, D**

g. curriculum leaders facilitate collaboration between teacher-librarians and English Language Arts teachers in the selection and promotion of student reading materials. **S, D**

3. Instruction

To ensure recognition of the current levels of students' reading achievements and to ensure continued improvement, it is recommended that:

a. society (parents, business, industry, government, etc.) recognize and acknowledge that learning related to the curriculum objectives dealing with meaning vocabulary and literal comprehension seem to have been adequately achieved; curriculum leaders should develop a communication strategy to inform society of this achievement; **T, S, D, M, F**

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b. in recognition of student achievement related to meaning vocabulary and literal comprehension, teachers be encouraged and supported to move instructional time, delivery and focus beyond these levels of achievement toward instructional strategies for improving inferential, critical-reflective and meta-cognitive achievements;	**T**
c. curriculum leaders develop a plan to facilitate 3(b) above and develop a communication strategy to inform society of the move to increased focus on higher order thinking strategies;	**T, S, D, M, F**
d. curriculum leaders be encouraged to provide systemic support for the paradigm shift which has been, and continues to be, required of English Language Arts teachers;	**S, D, M, F**
e. curriculum leaders be encouraged to value and actively support the role that language plays in student learning across the various disciplines;	**S, D**
f. in recognition of the complexity of the challenge with which English Language Arts teachers are faced, curriculum leaders be encouraged to support teachers in their ongoing efforts to deal with that challenge in areas such as scheduling, class size, preparation time and financing resources;	**S, D**
g. teachers facilitate strategies and approaches, experiences, activities and assignments which will challenge students to higher level thinking;	**T**
h. teachers use a greater range of reading materials and strategies (a range of difficulty levels and various types of text, including literary, dramatic, transactional, and journalistic, ensuring gender balance and multi-cultural representation) and provide students with experience in the use of a range of materials and strategies;	**T, S, D, M, F**

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i. some teachers redefine and broaden their definition of the ''content'' of language arts to include a major focus and emphasis on language (specifically, the student's ability to use language), cognition and metacognition; **T**

j. teachers re-examine the essential role of collaborative/ interactive learning in the development of language and higher level thinking skills; **T**

k. teachers facilitate student discussion of their reading (student- student, student-teacher) via informal talk, conferencing, small-group sharing, literature circles and whole-group/class discussion; **T**

l. teachers and curriculum leaders recognize the importance of the role of teacher-librarians in reading (language develop-ment), particularly as schools move toward resource-based learning. **T, S, D, F**

4. Evaluation and Assessment

Since curricula, instruction and evaluation must be interwoven, it is recommended that:

a. curriculum leaders provide teachers with the opportunities and support needed to acquire a variety of evaluation strategies and resources consistent with the goals and objectives of the curriculum; **S, D, M, F**

b. Manitoba Education and Training give teachers more practical and specific help with curriculum-congruent evaluation procedures, tools and approaches, recognizing that these must mesh with the reporting system within which teachers function. **T, S, D, M**

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II. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Because support for teachers is critical in implementing many of the above recommendations, it is recommended that:

a. curriculum leaders take an active interest in systematically keeping English Language Arts teachers informed about opportunities for professional development; **S, D, M, F**

b. curriculum leaders provide content area teachers with opportunities to learn about the role language plays in learning across the disciplines, and to acquire strategies for reading in the content areas; **S, D, M, F**

c. curriculum leaders provide English Language Arts teachers with opportunities for professional development, including professional reading related to current thinking in reading/language arts; **S, D, M, F**

d. Manitoba Education and Training note in the ''Teacher Reference'' section of the Manitoba Text Book Bureau catalogue that the materials listed there are included to facilitate teachers' professional development through professional reading. **M**

CHAPTER 11

COMPARISON TESTING

Several comparison studies were conducted in conjunction with the 1992 Reading Assessment. These studies consisted of: the application of a reading continuum rating of grade 4 students participating in the 1992 Reading Assessment and the re-administration of the 1985 provincial Reading Assessment at the four designated grades (3, 6, 9, 12). The data from these comparisons are reported below.

READING CONTINUUM RATING RESULTS (GRADE 4)

The Reading Continuum Rating component of the 1992 provincial Reading Assessment was administered only at grade 4. Its purpose was to obtain information on the reading levels of grade 4 students and the extent to which English Language Arts teachers use reading continua in Manitoba schools, and to assess the relationship between teacher ratings of students and the assessment results.

The reading continuum used in the survey was produced in Manitoba by Cochrane, Cochrane, Scalena, and Buchanan (1989). This reading continuum suggests seven stages of reading development: magical; self-concepting; bridging; take-off; independent; skilled; and advanced. Teachers were provided with two appendices, both of which could be retained for future use: one provided brief descriptions of each of the seven stages of the reading continuum; and the other suggested teaching strategies for use at each of the developmental stages.

Each Manitoba school offering a grade 4 program was provided with one copy of the Reading Continuum Rating, with instructions to share copies with those English Language Arts teachers whose students had been selected to participate in the grade 4 provincial Reading Assessment. A list of students in a given class was attached to the survey. A total of 1454 students, representing 612 schools, were included in the sample. (The student sample was the same for both the Reading Assessment and the Reading Continuum Rating.)

On the first page of the survey, teachers were asked to indicate whether they were familiar with any of the current reading continua such as the one developed by Cochrane, Cochrane, Scalena and Buchanan; and whether, in their current teaching practice, they regularly place individual students on a reading continuum in order to plan appropriate instructional activities for each child. At each point, teachers were asked to continue with the survey if their response was "yes." If their response was "no," they were asked to stop at that point and return page one of the survey along with the non-rated student list. (Teacher responses to items 1 and 2 are reported in Table 95 below.) Only those teachers who answered "yes" to both the first and second question were asked to use the reading continuum to rate the current reading level of students included on their respective lists.

TABLE 95

TEACHER FAMILIARITY WITH AND USE OF READING CONTINUA

Survey Questions*	Teacher Responses			TOTAL
	Yes	No	NR	
1. Are you familiar with any of the current reading continua such as developed by Cochrane, Cochrane, Scalena and Buchanan? *(Check one)*	191	209	0	400
2. In your current teaching practice, do you regularly place individual students on a reading continuum in order to plan appropriate instructional activities for each child? *(Check one)*	127	104	169	400

*These two questions comprised page 1 of the Reading Continuum Rating.

Of the 612 schools surveyed, 379 returned the Reading Continuum questionnaire. (A total of 400 copies of page 1 of the questionnaire were returned. The difference between the two figures is due to the return of more than one copy of page 1 by some schools.) Although schools were instructed to provide ratings only if they answered in the affirmative to both the first and second question, 87 schools offered ratings despite answering "no" to one or both questions. In addition, 113 schools answering "yes" to both questions provided ratings. Thus, a total of 200 schools provided ratings of students.

The 113 schools reporting both a familiarity with and regular use of current reading continua rated a total of 357 students from the sample of 1454 grade 4 Reading Assessment participants. These students were rated on the basis of the seven-stage reading continuum provided. The group data are reported in Table 96 below.

TABLE 96

READING CONTINUUM RATING*
Grade 4

Stages of Reading Continuum	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
1. Magical	0	0.0%
2. Self-Concepting	2	0.6
3. Bridging	21	5.9
4. Take-Off	48	13.4
5. Independent	151	42.3
6. Skilled	83	23.2
7. Advanced	52	14.6
TOTAL	357	100%

- * Student ratings in the 113 schools indicating familiarity with and regular use of reading continua.

The results of the Reading Continuum Rating indicate that nearly half the teachers (48% of respondents) have a knowledge of reading continua but just under a third (32%) actually use them regularly. While reading continua are recognized as a means of categorizing students learning to read, the statistical correlation test conducted accounted for only a small percentage (16%)[1] of observable differences between teacher placement of students on a reading continuum and the actual test scores. The correlations on the four subtests were as follows: Meaning Vocabulary 0.38187; Literal Comprehension 0.42025; Interpretive Comprehension 0.41509; and Critical-Reflective Comprehension 0.43607. All these correlations are positive and highly significant ($p = .0001$). These results should be interpreted cautiously since reading stages may have been interpreted differently by different teachers. It is also possible that reading continua and large scale assessments measure different aspects of reading and cannot be expected to correlate to any higher extent.

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[1] proportion of variation in the dependent variable (subtest) explained by the independent variable (continuum score) equals the square of the correlation between them ($r^2 = (.4)^2 = .16$)

COMPARISON OF 1985 AND 1992 READING ASSESSMENT RESULTS (GRADES 3, 6, 9, 12)

Comparison testing in reading was conducted in Manitoba schools from May 11 to 15, 1992, using the 1985 provincial Reading Assessment. The 1985 tests (minus the long-answer questions) were re-administered to a random sample of approximately 10% of schools at grades 3, 6, 9 and 12 in English language and Franco-Manitoban schools and in the French Immersion program. As in 1985, no distinction was made between the client groups.

The 1985 Reading Assessment was re-administered to determine the degree of change in the achievement of curriculum objectives between 1985 and 1992. Since the initial administration of the 1985 Reading Assessment there have been changes in school population (for example, as a result of mainstreaming) as well as in teaching emphases and curriculum expectations. These factors need to be considered when reviewing the results of the comparison testing.

Comparisons of the 1985 and 1992 test results for grades 3, 6, 9 and 12 are reported below (see Tables 97, 98, 99, 100). While there are observable differences in subtest achievement at each grade level, only two are statistically significant: grade 3, Critical-Reflective Compre-hension subtest; and grade 6, Study Skills subtest.

TABLE 97

COMPARISON OF 1985 AND 1992 READING ASSESSMENT GRADE 3 RESULTS

Subtest	Number of Items	Mean Raw Score		Significant Differences
		1985	1992	
• Meaning Vocabulary	5	4.02	3.96	None
• Literal Comprehension	15	11.21	10.77	None
• Interpretive Comprehension	20	14.35	13.76	None
• Critical-Reflective Comprehension	2	.83	.66	*
• Study Skills	2	1.47	1.40	None
• Cloze A	15	8.39	8.59	None
• Cloze B	14	11.28	11.32	None

* statistically significant

TABLE 98

COMPARISON OF 1985 AND 1992 READING ASSESSMENT RESULTS
GRADE 6

Subtest	Number of Items	Mean Raw Score 1985	Mean Raw Score 1992	Significant Differences
• Meaning Vocabulary	7	3.88	3.66	None
• Literal Comprehension	12	9.03	9.17	None
• Interpretive Comprehension	13	6.95	6.92	None
• Critical-Reflective Comprehension	7	3.94	3.89	None
• Study Skills	9	5.22	4.08	*
• Cloze	49	26.52	27.24	None

* statistically significant

TABLE 99

COMPARISON OF 1985 AND 1992 READING ASSESSMENT RESULTS
GRADE 9

Subtest	Number of Items	Mean Raw Score 1985	Mean Raw Score 1992	Significant Differences
• Meaning Vocabulary	6	4.70	4.68	None
• Literal Comprehension	11	7.35	7.04	None
• Interpretive Comprehension	10	6.52	6.49	None
• Critical-Reflective Comprehension	5	2.55	2.55	None
• Study Skills	5	4.18	4.32	None
• Cloze	51	22.01	21.50	None

TABLE 100

COMPARISON OF 1985 AND 1992 READING ASSESSMENT GRADE 12 RESULTS

Subtest	Number of Items	Mean Raw Score		Significant Differences
		1985	1992	
• Meaning Vocabulary	6	4.09	4.08	None
• Literal Comprehension	10	7.41	7.37	None
• Interpretive Comprehension	16	11.12	10.82	None
• Critical-Reflective Comprehension	4	3.11	3.19	None
• Cloze	50	22.93	23.70	None

APPENDIX A

READING ASSESSMENT – GRADE 4 PROVINCIAL STUDENT SAMPLE AND RETURN RATES

GRADE 4 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS (5% SAMPLE)

	Total	Public	Independent
No. of schools in sample	533	494	39
Enrolment (total population)	12 077	11 401	676
No. of students excluded from total	460	449	11
Sample population	605	571	34
Sample returned	568	—	—
RETURN RATE =	$\frac{568}{605} = 93.9\%$		

GRADE 4 - FRANCO-MANITOBAN SCHOOLS (100% SAMPLE)

	Total	Public	Independent
No. of schools in sample	20	—	—
Enrolment (total population)	449	—	—
No. of students excluded from total	5	—	—
Sample population	449	—	—
Sample returned	430	—	—
RETURN RATE =	$\frac{430}{449} = 95.8\%$		

GRADE 4 - FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM (25% SAMPLE)

	Total	Public	Independent
No. of schools in sample	59	—	—
Enrolment (total population)	1872	—	—
No. of students excluded from total	6	—	—
Sample population	469	—	—
Sample returned	456	—	—
RETURN RATE =	$\frac{456}{469} = 97.2\%$		

APPENDIX B

READING ASSESSMENT — GRADE 8 PROVINCIAL STUDENT SAMPLE AND RETURN RATES

GRADE 8 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS (5% SAMPLE)

	Total	Public	Independent
No. of schools in sample	382	342	30
Enrolment (total population)	12 056	11 331	725
No. of students excluded from total	332	328	4
Sample population	601	564	37
Sample returned	540	—	—

RETURN RATE = $\frac{540}{601}$ = 89.9%

GRADE 8 - FRANCO-MANITOBAN SCHOOLS (100% SAMPLE)

	Total	Public	Independent
No. of schools in sample	22	—	—
Enrolment (total population)	456	—	—
No. of students excluded from total	6	—	—
Sample population	456	—	—
Sample returned	437	—	—

RETURN RATE = $\frac{437}{456}$ = 95.8%

GRADE 8 - FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM (30% SAMPLE)

	Total	Public	Independent
No. of schools in sample	29	—	—
Enrolment (total population)	1363	—	—
No. of students excluded from total	2	—	—
Sample population	446	—	—
Sample returned	413	—	—

RETURN RATE = $\frac{413}{446}$ = 92.6%

APPENDIX C

READING ASSESSMENT — GRADE 11 PROVINCIAL STUDENT SAMPLE AND RETURN RATES

GRADE 11 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS (5% SAMPLE)			
	Total	**Public**	**Independent**
No. of schools in sample*	151	132	19
Enrolment (total population)	9 218	8 555	663
No. of students excluded from total	49	38	11
Sample population	931	865	66
Sample returned	739	—	—
RETURN RATE = $\frac{739}{931}$ **= 79.4%**	ELA course options reported: 200, 70%; 201, 21%; not reported, 9%		

** 8 schools were not included because they offered English in Semester 1.*

GRADE 11 - FRANCO-MANITOBAN SCHOOLS (100% SAMPLE)			
	Total	**Public**	**Independent**
No. of schools in sample*	9	—	—
Enrolment (total population)	173	—	—
No. of students excluded from total	1	—	—
Sample population	172	—	—
Sample returned	160	—	—
RETURN RATE = $\frac{160}{172}$ **= 93%**	*Anglais* course options reported: 200, 96%; 201, 2%; not reported, 2%		

** 3 schools were not included because they offered Anglais in Semester 1.*

GRADE 11 - FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM (100% SAMPLE)			
	Total	**Public**	**Independent**
No. of schools in sample	18	—	—
Enrolment (total population)	464	—	—
No. of students excluded from total	0	—	—
Sample population	464	—	—
Sample returned	415	—	—
RETURN RATE = $\frac{415}{464}$ **= 89.4%**	ELA course options reported: 200, 90%; 201, 6%; not reported, 4%		

FL_1 = Franco-Manitoban
FL_2 = French Immersion

APPENDIX D

READING ASSESSMENT – TEACHER SURVEY SAMPLE AND RETURN RATES

GRADE 4					
	Sample Size	Population*	Sample	Number Returned	Return Rate
English	50%	659	305	248	81.3%
FL_1	100%	26	22	17	77.3%
FL_2	100%	84	87	69	79.3%
TOTAL			414	334	

GRADE 8					
	Sample Size	Population*	Sample	Number Returned	Return Rate
English	66.6%	571	334	252	75.4%
FL_1	100%	22	19	16	84.2%
FL_2	100%	45	38	29	76.3%
TOTAL			391	297	

GRADE 11					
	Sample Size	Population*	Sample	Number Returned	Return Rate
English	75%	386	249	201	80.7%
FL_1	100%	16	18	12	66.7%
FL_2	100%	54	51	34	66.7%
TOTAL			318	247	

All populations were combined for final analysis:

NUMBER RETURNED → **247** = 77.7% (return rate)
TOTAL SAMPLE → **318**

***Population figures are approximate.**

APPENDIX E

PROCEDURES FOR SCORING OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE ITEMS

1992 READING ASSESSMENT (Grades 4, 8, 11)

PURPOSE:

- To establish inter-rater reliability (i.e. consistency in marking from teacher to teacher) in the use of scoring rubrics prepared for open-ended response items on the 1992 Reading Assessment.

I. TEAM ORGANIZATION

A. Team Members

- Project Co-ordinator for grades 4, 8 and 11
- Grade Level "Ring Master" (1 at each level)
- Team Captains/Markers (3 at each level)] *Question Teams*
- Markers (at each level)] *at each level*

B. Team Member Job Descriptions

Project Co-ordinator

- knowledgeable about the grade level test, scoring rubric and scoring procedures
- conscientious about the need for consistency across the various questions and markers
  - selects ring master, team captains and markers
  - assigns question to teams for marking
  - co-ordinates training for and marking of the open-ended response items on the assessment
  - facilitates initial training sessions for "ring master" and team captains
  - floats as trouble shooter during actual scoring sessions

Grade Level "Ring Master"

- knowledgeable about the grade level test, scoring rubric and scoring procedures
- conscientious about the need for consistency across the various questions and markers
  - participates in initial training sessions for "ring masters" and team captains
  - assists team captain in training team markers during scoring sessions

- checks scoring of every 10th paper to ensure consistency of marking
- reconvenes marking team(s) as necessary to review problematic/inconsistent scoring
- facilitates movement of grade level student papers across question teams
- facilitates movement of scored student papers to coding co-ordinator/team
- acts as "first line" grade-level-trouble-shooter and discusses scoring changes/modifications, problem areas, frustrations, with project co-ordinator
- convenes team debriefing near the end of each scoring session to discuss problem areas, frustrations, etc.

Grade Level Team Captains/Markers

- ◆ familiar with grade level test, scoring rubric and scoring procedures
- ◆ knowledgeable about test questions, scoring rubric and scoring procedures for questions assigned to his/her team.

    - conscientious about the need for consistency across the various questions and markers
    - participates in initial training sessions for "ring masters" and team captains
    - trains the "question team" beginning at the first scoring session
    - scores and works as a member of the "question team" on the questions assigned to his/her team, being sensitive to team needs to reconvene/discuss/refocus/regain consistency, etc, in scoring a particular question
    - keeps "ring master" informed of any problem areas, etc.
    - participates in team debriefing near the end of each scoring session to discuss problem areas, frustrations, etc.

Grade Level Questions Teams

- ◆ knowledgeable about test questions, scoring rubric and scoring procedures for questions assigned to his/her team
- ◆ conscientious about the need for consistency across the various questions and markers

    - participates in training session prior to scoring each question
    - scores questions assigned to team (all team members score the same question at the same time)
    - asks to reconvene as a group to discuss/refocus/regain consistency, etc, in scoring a particular question if necessary
    - keeps team captain informed of any problem areas, etc.
    - participates in team debriefing near the end of each scoring session to discuss problem areas, frustrations, etc.

II. TRAINING FOR RING MASTERS AND TEAM CAPTAINS

- facilitated by the project coordinator
- occurs prior to first scoring session by grade level
- prior to training session, project co-ordinator randomly selects 20 student papers; the project co-ordinator should review these papers to ensure that each level of the scoring rubric is represented
- copy the 20 papers so that each trainee (the ring leader and the three team captains) receives a *complete* package of the randomly selected student papers
- review, question by question (i.e., working with only one question at a time), the question, the scoring rubric and the scoring procedure for that question
- discuss/allow time for questions
- using scoring rubric (scoring key), score the first question in five of the randomly selected student papers
- review the scores assigned by the trainees for consistency
- evaluate/discuss/adjust for any inconsistencies/re-evaluate/re-check for consistency
- score the first question in five more of the randomly selected student papers
- evaluate/discuss/adjust for any inconsistencies/re-evaluate/re-check for consistency
- if consistency across the trainees is strong on the first question, proceed to the second question
- if consistency is weak, repeat the procedure with additional randomly selected student papers until consistency is achieved
- repeat procedure for each of the open-ended questions, using the specific rubrics (scoring key) for scoring
- discuss training/management procedures for working with the question teams for scoring
- assign each team captain the questions his/her team will be responsible for as well as his/her question team members

III. TRAINING FOR QUESTION TEAMS

- facilitated by the team captains
- share with team the open-ended questions it will be responsible for scoring
- training occurs during the scoring process

  Prior to the training session, project co-ordinator randomly selects 20 student papers; the project co-ordinator should review the papers to ensure that each level of the scoring rubric is represented *(note: these may be the same random samples used to train the "ring master" and team captains)*
- copy the 20 papers so that each trainee (ring master, team captains (3), and scorer (6) = 10 at each grade) receives a complete package of the randomly selected student papers

- working with the first question **assigned to the team**, review the question and the scoring rubric for **that** question (scoring key)
- discuss
- using five of the randomly selected student papers, score the first questions assigned to the question team (using scoring rubric for that question)
- review scores across the question team, checking for consistency
- evaluate/discuss/adjust for any inconsistencies/re-evaluate/re-check for consistency
- if necessary, score the first question using five different randomly selected student papers
- if consistency across the team is strong on that question, proceed to score the question in all of the actual student papers
- if consistency across the team is weak on the question, repeat the procedure outlined above with additional randomly selected student papers working until consistency is achieved - then score that question in all of the actual student papers
- if consistency issues arise as the actual scoring occurs, discuss, etc. (may need to re-score any student papers where consistency has been problematic)
- repeat process for each question assigned to the question team until all questions and all student papers have been scored

APPENDIX F

MEMBERS OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Grade 4 Test Development (to June 1992)

Gestny Ewart	Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface
Shirley Hogue	Frontier School Division #48
Irene Huggins	Morris MacDonald School Division #19
Wayne Kroetsch	Western School Division #47
Lucille Phaneuf	St. Boniface School Division #4
Gayle Robertson	Winnipeg School Division #1
Noni Struthers	Swan Valley School Division #35
Dale Severyn	Contractor (test development) Brandon School Division #40

from Manitoba Education and Training

Karmen Gill	Curriculum Assessment Curriculum Services Branch
Rae Harris	Early Years Curriculum Services Branch
Pat MacDonald	English Language Arts Curriculum Services Branch
Ernest Molgat	Curriculum Assessment Curriculum Services Branch
Florence Paynter	Early Childhood Education Native Education Branch
Doreen Yamashita	Special Education Child Care and Development Branch

MEMBERS OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Grade 4 Report Writing (from July 1992)

Shirley Adam	Fort Garry School Division #5
Gestny Ewart	Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface
Beverly Hardy	Transcona Springfield School Division #12
Gwen MacFadyen	Transcona Springfield School Division #12
Gilbert Perrin	St. Boniface School Division #4
Lucille Phaneuf	St. Boniface School Division #4
Susan Rempel Letkemann	Report Writer

from Manitoba Education and Training

Karmen Gill	Curriculum Assessment Curriculum Services Branch
Rae Harris	Early Years Curriculum Services Branch
Pat MacDonald	English Language Arts Curriculum Services Branch
Ernest Molgat	Curriculum Assessment Curriculum Services Branch

APPENDIX G

MEMBERS OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE – GRADE 8

Jim Frye	Lord Selkirk School Division #11
Nancy Gates	St. Vital School Division #6
Connie Graham (till June 1992)	St. Vital School Division #6
Jocelyne Hupé	Seine River School Division #14
Roger Landry	St. Boniface School Division #4
Gwen Merrick (till June 1992)	Post Secondary Preparation Program Central Park Learning Centre
Tim Pechey (from July 1992)	River East School Division #9
Noreen Rossnagel	Contractor (test development) Transcona-Springfield School Division #12
Susan Rempel Letkemann (from July 1992)	Report Writer

from Manitoba Education and Training

Karmen Gill	Curriculum Assessment Curriculum Services Branch
Pat MacDonald	English Language Arts Curriculum Services Branch
Ernest Molgat	Curriculum Assessment Curriculum Services Branch

APPENDIX H

MEMBERS OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE — GRADE 11

Bob Bilan	Assiniboine South School Division #3
Pat Fenske	Lord Selkirk School Division #11
Karen Guenther (until June 1992)	Seven Oaks School Division #10
Wayne Selby	St. Boniface School Division #4
Gisèle Vielfaure	Seine River School Division #14
Don Bewell	Contractor (test development)
Susan Rempel Letkemann (from July 1992)	Report Writer

from Manitoba Education and Training

Karmen Gill	Curriculum Assessment Curriculum Services Branch
Pat MacDonald	English Language Arts Curriculum Services Branch
Ernest Molgat	Curriculum Assessment Curriculum Services Branch

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